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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

XVIIITH CENTURY

VOL. III.

A

HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

NEW EDITION

VOLUME III.

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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER VI.

1790–1793.

It was hoped by the English Government that with the recall of the Marquis of Buckingham most of the unpopularity which attached to the system he had pursued would disappear, and the Earl of Westmorland came over with the object of carrying out that system without change. Contrary to the usual custom, Major Hobart, who had been Chief Secretary during the last six months of the Viceroyalty of Buckingham, continued to hold the same office under his successor, and there was no important change in the Administration. Parliament was summoned on January 21, 1790, and a short but very stormy session ensued. An Opposition, numbering about ninety members and led with great ability by Grattan and by George Ponsonby, vehemently arraigned the proceedings of the present ministers under the late Viceroyalty. They complained of the great recent increase in the Pension List, in the number of places and salaries held by members of Parliament, and

in the expense of collecting the revenue. They introduced without success a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, a Responsibility Bill, a Bill for disfranchising revenue officers modelled after the English legislation, and they raised a new and very serious question by accusing the late ministers of a systematic sale of peerages. Grattan, in the most explicit terms, charged them with having 'not in one or two, but in many instances' made corrupt agreements to recommend politicians for peerages, for money, which was to be employed in the purchase of seats in the House of Commons. Such an act, Grattan truly said, was an impeachable offence, and both he and Ponsonby pledged themselves in the most positive manner to adduce evidence before a committee which would lead to conviction.

The House of Commons, however, at the invitation of the Government refused by 144 votes to 88 to grant a committee of inquiry, and Hobart refused to give any answer when challenged by Grattan, if the charge was unfounded, to declare on his honour that he did not believe such corrupt agreements to have taken place. Defeated in these efforts, the Opposition, shortly before the close of the session, placed some of the chief facts of their case on the journals of the House, in the form of an address to the King. It stated, among other things, that although civil pensions amounting to 14,000*l.* a year had lapsed since the Lady Day of 1784, yet the Pension List was now 16,000*l.* a year higher than at that date; that in the same space of time the expense of collecting the revenue had risen by 105,000*l.*; that no less than forty places or salaries held by members of Parliament had been created or revived within the last twenty years; that, exclusive of pensions, fourteen places and salaries had been created or revived, and distributed among members of Parliament during the last Viceroyalty in a single year, and that out of the

300 members who composed the Irish House of Commons, there were now 108 who were in receipt of salaries or pensions from the Crown.[1]

Though the Opposition failed in shaking the majority of the Government, their speeches had much influence in the country, and as signs of discontent were rapidly approaching, Government thought it wise to hasten the election, and the Parliament was dissolved on April 8. The calculation was a just one, for on the whole the ministry appear to have slightly increased their majority, though for the first time since the death of Lucas they were defeated in the City of Dublin, where Lord Henry Fitzgerald and Grattan triumphed over the Court candidates. Among the new members were Arthur O'Connor the United Irishman, and Barrington the historian of the Irish Parliament; and two young men who were born in the same year, and who were destined for a long period to co-operate in the foremost rank of English politics, now for the first time appeared in public life. Robert Stewart, after a severe contest against the Hillsborough interest, was elected in the popular interest; pledged to vote for a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, a disfranchisement of revenue officers, and a reform of that Parliament which a few years later, as Lord Castlereagh, he succeeded by the most lavish corruption in overthrowing. Arthur Wellesley, or, as the name was then spelt, Wesley, was already an aide-de-camp at the Castle, and he now took his seat as a supporter of the Government, and appears to have spoken for the first time in seconding an address to the King in January 1793. The new Parliament sat for a fortnight in July in order to pass a vote of credit for 200,000*l.* for the apprehended war with Spain. The vote was carried unanimously, and with the warm approval of Grattan, who only urged that

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* x. 408–412.

it should be strictly devoted to the military purposes for which it was intended. Parliament was then adjourned and did not sit till the following January.

The signs of combination, agitation, and discontent outside the walls of Parliament were becoming very formidable, and there was a growing conviction that nothing could be done without a real reform of Parliament, and that such a reform could only be achieved by a strong pressure of external opinion. In June 1789 a large number of the principal gentlemen in Ireland, including Charlemont, Grattan, and Ponsonby, formed themselves into a Whig Club for the purpose of maintaining in its integrity the Constitution of 1782; preserving to Ireland 'in all time to come a Parliament of her own, residing within the realm and exclusively invested with all parliamentary privileges and powers,' and endeavouring by all legal and constitutional means to check the extravagance of Government and its corrupt influence in the Legislature. Their object, as Grattan afterwards said, was 'to obtain an internal reform in Parliament, in which they partly succeeded, and to prevent the Union, in which they failed.' The new society was as far as possible from being revolutionary or democratic. Among its original members were an archbishop, a bishop, and twelve peers, and among them were the Duke of Leinster, and Lord Shannon, the greatest borough owner of the kingdom. Whatever might be the opinion of its individual members, the club did not as a body demand either a reduction of the franchise, or the abolition of nomination boroughs, or the enfranchisement of the Catholics. The measures it stated to be essential were a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, a Bill to repeal or modify the Dublin police, a disqualification of revenue officers, and a curtailment of the unnecessary offices which had recently been created, and distributed among members of Parliament.

The Whig Club was warmly eulogised by Burke;[1] and it would have been happy if the conduct of the reform question had rested in hands that were at once so responsible and so moderate. The formation of a powerful and connected party of moderate reformers, pledged to seek by all constitutional means the ends which have been stated, was of no small importance; but it was scarcely possible that in a country situated like Ireland, the democratic and levelling principles with which the French Revolution was now intoxicating the most ardent spirits throughout Europe should not have had an extraordinary power. Even in the House of Commons its influence was not wholly unfelt; and two speeches were delivered in the early session of 1790 which were so new and menacing in their tone, and so clearly indicative of the coming storm, that they may well arrest our attention. The speaker was Mr., afterwards Sir Lawrence, Parsons, and at a later period the second Earl of Rosse; and he was already rising rapidly to the front rank among the debaters in the House. Having noticed that since the last session no less than fourteen places had been made simply for the purpose of distributing among members of Parliament; and that this was 'but a supplement to the most corrupt traffic of many old places, to the prostitute disposal of many pensions, and to the public and scandalous barter of the honours of the Crown, all recently perpetrated for the purpose of accomplishing a depraved influence over the members of this House,' he asked, if 'the country gentlemen of Ireland support such a system of flagrant and stupendous corruption, how do they think the people will receive them at the end of the session?' 'Boast,' he continued, 'of the prosperity of your country

[1] See Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 219. 220. The original list of the members will be found in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 432–438.

as you may, and after all I ask what is it but a secondary kingdom? An inferior member of a great Empire, without any movement or orbit of its own? The connection with England has its advantages and disadvantages. I grant that the advantages greatly preponderate, and that if we were well governed we should have every reason to be content. . . . But if we are satisfied with the humility of being but an appendage to another kingdom, we should take care to receive the principal compensation a State can bring: namely, a frugal dispensation of government. We may pride ourselves that we are a great kingdom, but the fact is that we are scarcely known beyond the boundaries of our shores. Who out of Ireland ever hears of Ireland? What name have we among the nations of the earth? Who fears us? Who respects us? Where are our ambassadors? What treaties do we enter into? With what nation do we make peace or declare war? Are we not a mere cipher in all these, and are not these what give a nation consequence and fame? All these are sacrificed to the connection with England. . . . A suburb to England, we are sunk in her shade. True, we are an independent kingdom; we have an imperial crown distinct from England; but it is a metaphysical distinction, a mere sport for speculative men. . . . Who governs us? English ministers, or rather the deputies of English ministers, mere subalterns of office, who never dare to aspire to the dignity of any great sentiment of their own. . . . We are content, and only ask in return for honest and frugal government. Is it just, is it wise, is it safe to deny it?'

'It is asked why, after all the acquisitions of 1782, there should be discontent? To this I say, that when the country is well governed, the people ought to be satisfied, but not before. If a people are ill governed, it signifies little whether they be so in consequence of

corruption from abroad or depravity at home. . . . The acquisitions of 1782 freed this country from internal power, but not from internal malversation. On the contrary, this country has been governed worse since then than ever it was before; and why? because of these very acquisitions. . . . It has been the object of English ministers ever since to countervail what we obtained at that period, and substitute a surreptitious and clandestine influence for the open power which the English Legislature was then obliged to relinquish.' 'The people of this island are growing more enlightened every day, and will soon know and feel their power. Near four millions of people in a most defensible country ought, perhaps, to be courted, but ought certainly not to be insulted with the petty, pilfering, jobbing, corrupting tricks of every deputy of a deputy of an English Minister that is sent over here.' 'The people required the concessions which were made during the American war because they expected to be governed better in consequence of them. Do you think they will be satisfied to find that they are not? Those concessions on the part of the English Parliament I grant were as ample as they well could be, for they were everything short of separation. Let ministers then beware of what conclusions they may teach the people, if they teach them this, that the attainment of everything short of separation will not attain for them good government.' 'Where, or when, or how, is all this to end? Is the Minister of England himself sure that he sees the end? Can he be sure that this system, which has been forming for the coercion of Ireland, may not ultimately cause the dissolution of the Empire?' [1]

[1] *Parl. Deb.* x. 240–246, 344–348. It is worthy of notice that Wolfe Tone states in his autobiography, that it was about this time that he arrived at the conclusion which directed his whole

The elements of revolution were indeed abundantly provided, and two aspects of the French Revolution had a very special significance for Ireland. It proclaimed as its first principle the abolition of every kind of religious disqualification, and it swept away the whole system of tithes.[1] The triumph of the volunteers in 1782, though it had been used with great moderation, formed a very dangerous precedent of a Legislature overawed or influenced by military force; and the volunteers, though they had dwindled in numbers, and were now generally discountenanced by the better classes, were still a formidable body. In 1790, Charlemont found that the Derry army alone was at least 3,400 strong;[2] and two years later Lord Westmorland ascertained that the volunteer force possessed no less than forty-four cannon. The Presbyterianism of the North, and especially of Belfast, had long been inclined to republicanism. The population of Belfast, according to a paper drawn up by the Government, had increased between 1779 and 1791 from 8,549 to 18,320. A Northern Whig Club was speedily established there, in imitation of that at Dublin, but its timid or moderating counsels were not suited for the political temperature. Towards the close of 1790 the Irish Government sent information to England that a dangerous movement had begun among the volunteers at Belfast. Resolu-

subsequent policy—that 'the influence of England was the radical vice' of Irish government, and that Ireland would never be independent while the connection with England subsisted. 'In forming this theory,' he says, 'I was exceedingly assisted by an old friend of mine, Sir Lawrence Parsons, whom I look upon as one of the very few honest men in the Irish House of Commons. It was he who first turned my attention on this great question, but I very soon ran far ahead of my master.' Tone's *Life* (American edition), i. 32. Parsons' line of argument appears, indeed, to have been very generally adopted by the United Irishmen.

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 12, 13.

[2] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 225.

tions had been passed, and papers circulated, advocating the abolition of all tithes, or at least of all tithes paid by Protestant Dissenters and Catholics, as well as a searching reform of Parliament and of Administration; eulogising the 'glorious spirit' shown by the French in 'adopting the wise system of Republican Government, and abrogating the enormous power and abused influence' of the clergy; inviting the Protestant Dissenters to support the enfranchisement of the Catholics, and to co-operate with the Catholics in advocating parliamentary reform and the abolition of tithes. The volunteers were reminded that whatever constitutional progress Ireland had obtained had been due to them, and they were urged to make every effort at once to fill their ranks.[1]

In July 1791 the anniversary of the French Revolution was celebrated at Belfast with great enthusiasm. All the volunteers of the neighbourhood attended. An address drawn up in a strain of the most fulsome admiration was sent to France. Democratic toasts were drunk, and speeches made eulogising Paine, Washington, and the French Revolution, and demanding an equal representation in Parliament, and the abolition of the remaining Popery laws. A resolution was shortly after drawn up by the first volunteer company, in favour of the abolition of religious disqualifications, and it was responded to by an address of thanks from some Catholic bodies. This was said to have been the first considerable sign of that union of the Presbyterians and Catholics which led to the formation of the United Irish Society.[2] Paine's 'Rights of Man' was about the same time widely distributed in the North, and it made many converts. His controversy with

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[1] Westmorland to Grenville, Oct. 5, 17, 1790.

[2] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 14, 15.

Burke 'and the gigantic event which gave rise to it changed in an instant the politics of Ireland. . . . In a little time the French Revolution became the text of every man's political creed.'[1] 'The language and bent of the conduct of these Dissenters,' wrote Westmorland in July, 'is to unite with the Catholics, and their union would be very formidable. That union is not yet made, and I believe and hope it never could be.'[2]

In the September of the same year an extremely able pamphlet appeared under the signature of 'A Northern Whig,' urging the necessity of a reform of Parliament, and, as a means of attaining it, a close alliance between the Catholics and the Presbyterians. It was written by Theobald Wolfe Tone, a young Protestant lawyer of no small ability, but much more fitted by his daring, adventurous, and enthusiastic character, for military enterprise and for political conspiracy than for the disputes of the law courts. He had for a short time been connected with the Whig Club, but soon broke away from it, and was passionately imbued with the principles of French democracy.

His pamphlet is especially remarkable for the clearness with which it sounded a note which now became common in Irish popular politics—unqualified hatred of the Irish Parliament, and profound contempt for the revolution of 1782. He described that revolution as 'the most bungling, imperfect business that ever threw ridicule on a lofty epithet by assuming it unworthily.' It doubled the value of the property of every borough owner in the kingdom, but it confessedly left three-fourths of the Irish people without even the semblance of political rights, and the remaining fourth completely helpless in the hands of an alien Government. As all

[1] Tone's *Life*, i. 42, 43.
[2] Westmorland to Dundas (private), July 26, 1791.

the counties and considerable towns of Ireland combined only returned eighty-two members, the parliamentary direction rested wholly with the purchased borough members. All that had really been effected in 1782 was to increase the corrupt price by which the Government of Ireland was carried on. 'Before 1782 England bound us by her edict. It was an odious and not very safe exertion of power, but it cost us nothing. Since 1782 we are bound by English influence acting through our own Parliament,' and paid for out of our own resources. In England 'the people suffer in theory by the unequal distribution of the elective franchise; but practically it is perhaps visionary to expect a Government that shall more carefully or steadily follow their real interests. No man can there be a minister on any other terms.' In Ireland, alone among European countries, the Government is not only unnational but anti-national, conducted by men whose first duty is to represent another nation, and by every method in their power to repress every Irish interest which could in the most distant way interfere with the commerce or policy or patronage of England. This is esteemed the measure of their skill and of their success, and it is always their chief recommendation to the favours of the Crown. How successfully they accomplished their task was sufficiently shown by the fact that the Irish Parliament, by its own law, excluded itself from a commerce with half the known world, in the interest of a monopolising English company, and had just voted a military expenditure of 200,000*l.* to secure the very commerce from which Ireland was for ever excluded.[1] Without a searching parliamentary

[1] Tone had already written a pamphlet under the signature of Hibernicus, to show that Ireland should take no part in an English war with Spain about Nootka Sound. Grattan, as we have seen, had fully supported the vote of credit for that war.

reform the overwhelming stress of English influence in the Irish Legislature can never be resisted, and it is a wild dream to suppose that such a reform could be attained without the efforts of the whole nation. This was the error which ignominiously wrecked the Convention of 1783 in spite of the genius of Flood, and has left Ireland struck with political paralysis at a time when the spirit of reform has descended on all other nations and when the most inveterate abuses are withering beneath its touch. As long as the Irish sects are at enmity with each other, it will be always easy for the Administration by playing on the fears of the Protestants and the hopes of the Catholics to defy them both. But if the whole body of the people demand a reform of Parliament, which will include the concession of the elective franchise to the Catholics, Ireland will then at last obtain an honest and an independent representation.

It was the main object of this pamphlet to prove that no serious danger would attend the enfranchisement of the Catholics, and that members of the two religions might sit side by side in an Irish Legislature as they did in the French National Assembly and in the American Congress. The last remnants of Jacobitism, he argued, had vanished with the extinction of the Stuarts. 'The wealthy and moderate party of the Catholic persuasion with the whole Protestant interest would form a barrier against invasion of property' if any party among the Catholics were mad and wicked enough to attempt it. A national provision for the education of the Catholic priests would remove 'that which daily experience shows to be one of the heavy misfortunes of Ireland, that the consciences, the morals, and the religion of the bulk of the nation are in the hands of men of low birth, low feelings, low habits, and no education.' The clouds of religious bigotry and in-

tolerance were vanishing rapidly before the great light that had arisen in France. The Catholic gentry were fully fitted for the exercise of power, and considering the great disproportion of property and therefore of power in the hands of Protestants, even a reformed Parliament would consist mainly of Protestants. At the same time Tone added one passage which is not a little remarkable as coming from a writer who in the general type of his politics was an unqualified democrat. 'If,' he wrote, 'there be serious grounds for dreading a majority of Catholics, they may be removed in a very obvious mode. Extend the elective franchise to such Catholics only as have a freehold of ten pounds by the year, and on the other hand strike off the disgrace to our Constitution and our country, the wretched tribe of forty-shilling freeholders whom we see driven to their octennial market by their landlords, as much their property as the sheep or the bullocks which they brand with their names.'[1]

It is said that not less than ten thousand copies of this pamphlet were sold, and its teaching was rapidly diffused. The letters of Lord Westmorland show the activity with which papers of the same tenor were disseminated during the summer of 1791; and in October, Wolfe Tone founded at Belfast the first Society of United Irishmen. It consisted of thirty-six original members, and was intended to aim at 'an equal representation of all the people of Ireland.' It adopted as its first principles three resolutions asserting 'that the weight of English influence in the government of this country is so great as to require a cordial union among all the people of Ireland to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties and the

[1] This remarkable pamphlet, as well as the other works of Wolfe Tone, will be found appended to the American edition of his life.

extension of our commerce; that the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament, and that no reform is just which does not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion.' Very soon a branch of the Society was established at Dublin. Napper Tandy, who had long been working as a demagogue in the more obscure forms of Irish agitation, was the Secretary of the Dublin Society. A lawyer named Simon Butler, brother of Lord Mountgarret, was the chairman. A test was adopted which each member of the Society subscribed, pledging him 'in the presence of God' to devote all his abilities and influence to the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament, and as a means to this end, to forward a union and co-operation of Irishmen of all religious persuasions. In December, the Society issued a circular letter expounding its principles, and inviting the people of Ireland of all creeds to establish similar societies in every district; and in the beginning of the following year, a newspaper called 'The Northern Star,' which soon attained a great circulation and influence, was established at Belfast to advocate their views. Its editor was a woollen draper named Samuel Neilson, the son of a Presbyterian minister, and one of the most active original members of the United Society of Belfast.

The Society of United Irishmen was at first constituted for the simple purpose of forming a political union of Protestants and Catholics, and thus obtaining a liberal measure of parliamentary reform. In the remarkable memoir drawn up after the rebellion, by Thomas Emmet, McNevin, and Arthur O'Connor, which is the clearest and most succinct statement of the views of some of its leading members, it is posi-

tively asserted that although from the beginning they clearly perceived 'that the chief support of the borough interest in Ireland, was the weight of English influence,' the question of separation was not at first so much as agitated among them; that a considerable period elapsed before the conviction that parliamentary reform could not be attained without a revolution, led them, timidly and reluctantly, to republicanism; and that even after a large proportion of the members had become republicans, the whole body would have stopped short at reform.

It is probable that this statement represents truly the opinions of the majority of the first leaders of the Society, but it is certain that there were some among them, who from the beginning were more than mere speculative republicans, and who clearly saw that revolution was the natural issue of their movement. Among these must be reckoned both Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy. The former has frankly acknowledged in his autobiography, that a desire to break the connection with England was one of his first objects, and that hatred of England was so deeply rooted in his nature that 'it was rather an instinct than a principle.'[1] The journal which he wrote at Belfast, at the time when he was engaged in founding the Society, shows that he was at that time speculating much on the possibility of Ireland subsisting independently of Great Britain, and on the prosperity she might in that case attain, and in a letter written by him

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[1] *Life of Wolfe Tone*, i. 55. In another place he writes: 'To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England (the never-failing source of all our political evils), and to assert the independence of my country, these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland . . . to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter, these were my means.'—Ibid. p. 51.

some months earlier, he expressed this opinion most explicitly. 'My unalterable opinion,' he wrote, 'is that the bane of Irish prosperity is in the influence of England. I believe that influence will ever be extended while the connection between the countries continues. Nevertheless, as I know that opinion is for the present too hardy, though a very little time may establish it universally, I have not made it a part of the resolutions; I have only proposed to set up a reformed Parliament as a barrier against that mischief, which every honest man that will open his eyes must see in every instance overbears the interest of Ireland. I have not said one word that looks like a wish for separation, though I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion that such an event would be a regeneration to this country.'[1]

From the beginning of the French Revolution, Tandy is said to have carried on a correspondence with French agents or politicians, and the Belfast members of the Society appear to have been especially intoxicated by the French Revolution. In general, however, the Society differed from its predecessors rather in tendency than in principle. One of the points most prominent in the confidential correspondence of Tone is his great dislike to the Whig Club, and to the whole type of Whig politics: 'They are not sincere friends to the popular cause, they dread the people as much as the Castle does.' He described them as peddling with insufficient measures, and he desired above all things that the respect for the names of Charlemont and Grattan should

[1] *Secret Committee*, pp. 38, 39, 50–56. This letter was intercepted and sent to England early in July (Westmorland to Sydney, July 11, 1791). It was accompanied by a sketch of a proposed secret society modelled after the Freemasons, intended to advocate in Ireland the rights of men, and to correspond with the Jacobin Club in Paris and with different reform societies in England.

be dismissed, and the conduct of the national movement placed in other and more energetic hands.[1]

The opposition so strongly stated between the two types of policy was a very real one. Grattan was quite as earnest as Tone in advocating the enfranchisement of the Catholics and the reform of Parliament. He was quite as fully convinced that it should be the supreme end of every Irish patriot gradually to blend into a single body the descendants of the conquerors and of the conquered. But in every period of his career he maintained the necessity of the connection with England, and in times of danger and of war there was scarcely any sacrifice he was not prepared to make to support Imperial interests. He had nothing of the French and cosmopolitan sympathies of the English Whigs, and he always made it a vital principle of his Irish policy to discourage all hostility towards England. The spirit of the United Irishmen was from the beginning wholly different. They believed, in opposition to Grattan, that it was possible for Ireland to subsist and flourish as a separate State, and their attitude towards Great Britain, when it was not one of disaffection and hostility, was at least one of alienation and indifference.

Grattan's theory of parliamentary reform, again, was essentially a Whig one. He looked with undisguised abhorrence on the subversive and levelling theory of government which the French Revolution had introduced into the world; that 'Gallic plant,' as he picturesquely described it, 'whose fruit is death, though it is not the tree of knowledge.' He always believed that a country with social and religious divisions, and antecedents of property such as exist in Ireland, is totally unfit for democracy, and he clearly saw that to govern

[1] *Secret Committee*, pp. 38, 39.

Ireland on democratic principles would lead to political ruin. Although he strenuously maintained that religious belief should not form the line of political division or exclusion, he was in one sense a strong advocate for Protestant ascendency. At every period of his life he contended that Ireland could only be well governed when its political system was so organised that the direction and control of the country was in the hands of Irish property and Irish intelligence. We have already seen how he denounced the profligate manner in which peerages were bestowed, on the ground that it was destroying the moral authority of an influence which was exceedingly necessary in Ireland. In one of his speeches he predicted that the attempts to pervert and disgrace the peerage were certain to lead men to desire its extinction, and declared that a minister who pursued such a course was a pioneer to the leveller, for he was demolishing the moral influences that support authority, rank, and subordination.[1] In another he asserted that 'no country was ever temperately or securely conducted' without an Upper Chamber.[2] In a third he declared that, bad as was the existing state of Irish representation, he would prefer it to the system of personal and individual representation advocated by the United Irishmen, which would 'destroy the influence of landed property,' and thus give up the 'vital and fundamental articles of the British Constitution;' and he proceeded to predict with a terrible distinctness what an Irish Parliament would be, if it were disconnected from the property of the country. 'This plan of personal representation,' he said, 'from a revolution of power would speedily lead to a revolution of property, and become a plan of plunder as well as a scene of confusion. For if you transfer the power of the State to

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xi. 132. [2] Ibid. xiii. 14.

those who have nothing in the country, they will afterwards transfer the property. . . . Of such a representation the first ordinance would be robbery, accompanied with the circumstance incidental to robbery, murder.'

'The best method,' he said, in the same speech, 'of securing the parliamentary Constitution, is to embody in its support the mass of property, which will be generally found to include the mass of talents.'[1] He severely censured the policy of the Government towards the Catholics in 1792, because it tended 'to detach and divide the landed interest of the Catholics from the body at large,' and in this way, 'to destroy the subordination of the common people, and to set population adrift from the influence of property.'[2] He was strongly opposed, it is true, to the oligarchical Government which subsisted in Ireland, but he opposed it mainly on the ground that it so narrowed the basis of representation that the great mass of freeholders, leaseholders, and resident trading interests in the country possessed not more than a fifth of the representation.[3] Of his own policy he said, 'It leads from personal representation, not to it; it ascertains representation to property, and to the propertied community, and whatever force, weight, influence, or authority both possess, unites them against the attempts in favour of personal representation.'[4]

And a very similar train of thought continually appears in his opposition to the Union. One of his strongest arguments against that measure was that it would do what in Ireland was peculiarly dangerous, take the government of the country out of the hands

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[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 74–87.
[2] Ibid. xiii. 8.
[3] Ibid. xiv. 76.
[4] Ibid.

of the resident gentry, shatter or seriously weaken the authority of property and education, and thus throw the political guidance of the nation into the hands of demagogues and charlatans. I have elsewhere quoted his striking prophecy that Ireland would one day avenge herself for the loss of her Parliament and Constitution by sending into the English Parliament 'a hundred of the greatest scoundrels in the kingdom.'

This type of policy is not popular in the present day, but it is necessary clearly to understand it, in order to estimate truly the position of Grattan in Irish history. With two or three exceptions the reforming party which followed his banner in Parliament was wholly alien to the spirit of the French Revolution; and even in advocating parliamentary reform, the language of the most prominent members of the party was much more akin to that of Burke than to that of Paine. 'The right of universal suffrage,' said one of them, 'is utterly incompatible with the preservation of property in this country or any other. I know well that the means by which the hands of the many are held off from the possessions of the few are a nice and artificial contrivance of civilised society. The physical strength is theirs already. If we add to that the strength of convention and compact, all is at their mercy.' And the same speaker added that the opposition between the French party and the Whig Club in Ireland was so strong that the former would prefer the present system with all its anomalies to Ponsonby's Reform Bill.[1] Among all the considerable politicians in the Irish Parliament, Parsons was the one who in general approached most nearly to the United Irishmen. But on the question of the true principle of representation the language of Parsons was emphatically Whig. 'The distemper of the times,' he said, 'is that

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 89.

most men consider how they shall get political power, not how they shall get good government. . . . Speculators may talk of the right of the many, but the true consideration is the good of the many, and that is to dispose the franchise so that it will produce the best representatives.'[1]

The distinction between these views and those of the United Irishmen was very manifest. The Whig Club, as we have seen, originally confined itself to supporting measures of secondary reform, which had been carried in England, such as Pension Bills, Place Bills, and a disqualification of revenue officials; and when at last in 1794 Ponsonby and Grattan introduced a Reform Bill, it was much less ambitious even than the Reform Bills of Flood. It left the suffrage and the duration of Parliament entirely unchanged, but it proposed to give an additional member to each county and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and to enlarge the constituencies of the boroughs by throwing into them considerable sections of the adjoining country.[2] All these measures proceeded on the assumption that the Constitution of Ireland was essentially a good one, and might be amended without subverting any of its fundamental principles. In the eyes of the United Irishmen the boasted Constitution of Ireland was a mere caricature of representation, and they proposed a complete reconstruction on the most approved principles of French democracy. They proposed that Ireland should be divided into three hundred equal electoral districts, each of them returning one member, that every full-grown male should have a vote, subject only to the condition of six months' residence, that the representatives should be paid and exempt from all

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[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 102.

[2] Grattan, however, while supporting strongly this reform, confessed that it did not go as far as he wished. *Parl. Deb.* xiv. 75.

property qualification, and that Parliaments should be annual.[1]

While this democratic spirit was rising up among the reformers, a similar spirit was appearing in that body which was especially devoted to the interests of the Catholics. Since the quarrel of 1783 the Catholic Committee had led a very dormant existence, and it was a common feeling that the initiative in matters relating to the Catholics should be left to the Government. This appears to have been the decided opinion of Grattan, who knew that the Opposition were by no means unanimous on the question, and who keenly felt that it would be very unfavourable to the Catholic cause if it were made a party question. The direction of the Catholic body had hitherto been almost altogether in the hands of their prelates, and of a few noblemen—among whom Lord Kenmare was the most conspicuous—closely connected with the Government. But another type of Catholic leader, springing out of the rich trading class, was now appearing, and it found a leader of some ability in John Keogh, a Dublin tradesman, who for many years exercised much influence over Irish politics.

Several circumstances were conspiring to make this party ascendant in the Catholic Committee. Towards the close of 1790 the Catholic Committee waited upon Major Hobart, requesting him to support a petition to Parliament which asked for nothing specific, but simply prayed that the case of the Catholics should be taken into consideration; but their request was refused, and they could not find a single member to present their petition to Parliament. In the course of the same year an address of loyalty, intended to be presented to Lord Westmorland by the Catholics, on the occasion of a visit of the Lord Lieutenant to Cork, was returned to them,

[1] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 239, 240.

because it concluded with a hope that their loyalty would lead to a further relaxation of the penal code. In the beginning of 1791 a deputation from the Catholic Committee went to the Castle with a list of the penal laws which they were anxious to have modified or repealed, but they were dismissed without even the courtesy of an answer.[1]

Lord Kenmare and the leading gentry on the Committee would have gladly desisted from all further agitation; they regarded with extreme aversion the projects of union for the purpose of achieving parliamentary reform held out by the Dissenters, and a quarrel broke out on these points between the two sections of the Committee, which continued during a great part of 1791. At last the party of Lord Kenmare, which included most of the country gentry, proposed a resolution leaving the measure and extent of future relaxations of the disabilities wholly to the Legislature; but the more democratic members of the Committee successfully resisted it. Lord Kenmare and more than sixty of the principal gentry of the party then formally seceded from the Committee,[2] and presented, in December 1791, a separate address to the Lord Lieutenant, asking for a further repeal of the laws affecting the Catholics, but leaving the extent wholly to the Legislature.[3] The original Committee thus passed completely under the influence of the more democratic party, and it was noticed as a symptom of the new spirit appearing in the Catholic body, that resolutions were passed in almost all the counties and large towns of the kingdom approving of its conduct, and censuring the sixty-eight seceders.[4]

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[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 18–20.

[2] On this secession compare McNevin, p. 20; Plowden, ii. 334; Tone's *Life*, i. 48–50. The materials for forming an opinion about it are miserably inadequate.

[3] Plowden, ii. appendix, pp. 173–175.

[4] McNevin, p. 21.

The great and rapid growth of the Catholic commercial interest is one of the facts most constantly adverted to in the early years of George III., and it had given a new independence to the Catholic body. Their political importance had been greatly increased by the tendency to unite the Catholic question with the question of parliamentary reform which had appeared among the reformers of the North, and a considerable amount of new and energetic life was infused into the Catholic Committee by an election which took place in the spring of 1790.[1] The position of the Catholics was, it is true, very different from what it had been twenty years before, but it may be questioned whether their sense of their grievances had proportionately abated. They were no longer a crushed, torpid, impoverished body with scarcely any interest in political affairs. The relaxations that enabled them to live in peace, and the industrial prosperity that enabled them to acquire wealth, education, and local importance, had retained in the country enterprising and ambitious men who in a former generation would have sought a career in France, or Austria, or Spain. Every great movement which had taken place since the accession of George III. had contributed to deepen their sense of the anomaly of their position. The Octennial Act had created a strong political life in Ireland, but the Catholics alone were excluded from its benefits. The American struggle had made it a commonplace of politics that representation and taxation were inseparably connected, but the denomination which included some four-fifths of the Irish people did not possess the smallest control over the national revenue. The Revolution of 1782 had placed Ireland, ostensibly at least, in the rank of free and self-governed kingdoms, but it left the Catholics with no more political

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 152, 153.

rights than the serfs of Russia or of Poland. The very law that enabled them to acquire land, made them more sensible of the disqualification, which in their case alone, deprived land of the franchise which the Constitution had annexed to it. The French Revolution had persuaded multitudes that government is the inalienable right of the majority, and even among those who repudiated the principles of Rousseau and Paine, it had greatly raised the standard of political requirements, and increased the hostility to political inequalities and disqualifications.

It was impossible, indeed, that in such a state of society, intelligent Catholics could contemplate their own position in Ireland without feelings of the keenest humiliation and resentment. Though they represented the immense majority of the people, they were wholly excluded from the executive, from the legislative, from the judicial powers of the State; from all right of voting in parliamentary and municipal elections; from all control over the national expenditure; from all share in the patronage of the Crown. They were marked out by the law as a distinct nation, to be maintained in separation from the Protestants, and in permanent subjection to them. Judged by the measure of its age, the Irish Parliament had shown great liberality during the last twenty years, but the injury and the insult of disqualification still met the Catholic at every turn. From the whole of the great and lucrative profession of the law he was still absolutely excluded, and by the letter of the law the mere fact of a lawyer marrying a Catholic wife and educating his children as Catholics incapacitated him from pursuing his profession. Land and trade had been thrown open to Catholics almost without restrictions, but the Catholic tenant still found himself at a frequent disadvantage, because he had no vote and no influence with those who administered local justice, and

the Catholic trader because he had no voice in the corporations of the towns. Catholics had begun to take a considerable place among the moneyed men of Ireland; but when the Bank of Ireland was founded in 1782, it was specially provided that no Catholic might be enrolled among its directors. Medicine was one of the few professions from which they had never been excluded, and some of them had risen to large practice in it, but even here they were subject to galling distinctions. They were incapacitated from holding any of the three medical professorships on the University establishment, or any of the four professorships at the School of Physic, or the more recently created clinical professorship; and the law, while excluding native Catholics from these professorships, actually ordered that, for three months previous to the nomination to a vacancy in them, invitations should be circulated through Europe inviting Protestants of all nations to compete for them.[1] Catholic physicians were excluded from all situations on the army establishment, from the offices of State physician or surgeon, and from a crowd of places held under charter, patent, or incorporation; and as they could not take the rank of Fellow in the College of Physicians, they were unable to hold any office in that body.

The social effects of the code continued with little abatement, though mere theological animosity had almost died away. The political helplessness of the lower orders in their relation with the upper classes had injuriously affected the whole tone of manners, and the few Catholic gentry could not but feel that they were members of an inferior class, living under the stigma and the disqualifications of the law. Most Catholics who had risen to wealth had done so as merchants or

[1] 25 Geo. III. c. 42.

cattle dealers, and the mercantile classes in Ireland had very little social position. The old Catholic gentry lived much apart, and had but small intercourse with the Protestants. The exclusion of Catholics from the bar was in this respect peculiarly mischievous, for of all professions the bar is that which does most to bring men of various religions into close and frequent contact. There were convivial clubs in Ireland in which it was a by-law that no Papist should be admitted,[1] and Burke, probably, scarcely exaggerated when he asserted that there were thousands of persons of the upper orders in Ireland, who had never in their lives conversed with a Catholic, unless they happened to talk to their gardener's workmen, or to ask their way, when they had lost it, in their sports.[2]

It was quite evident that such a state of society was thoroughly unnatural and demoralising, and it was equally evident that it could not possibly be permanent. One great work of the Irish Parliament during the past generation had been the gradual removal of religious disqualifications and monopolies, but the most serious part of the task was still to be accomplished, and the French Revolution had forced on the question, to an immediate issue. The process of slow enfranchisements, which had once been gratefully received, was scarcely possible in the changed condition of the public mind. A declaration issued by the Catholic Committee in October 1791, demanding in strong terms a complete abolition of all parts of the penal code, was a significant sign of the new spirit which had arisen, and it was evident that the principles of the North had found some lodgment in the minds of the new Catholic leaders. The Catholic Committee was reorganised, and placed

[1] McKenna's *Essays on the Affairs of Ireland in* 1791–1793, p. 26.

[2] Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.

more completely under the influence of the democratic party; and despairing of help from the Administration of Ireland, it resolved to send a deputation to England. The resolution was accomplished, and in January 1792 Keogh and four other delegates laid the petition of the Catholics before the King.

The task which now lay before the ministers was one which demanded the highest statesmanship, and the whole future history of Ireland depended mainly on the manner in which it was accomplished. If the enfranchisement of the Catholics could be successfully carried out, if the chasm that yawned between the two great sections of the Irish people could be finally bridged, if an identity of interests and sympathies could be established between the members of the two creeds, Ireland would indeed become a nation, and she might reasonably look forward to a continuous growth of power and prosperity. If on the other hand the task was tardily or unskilfully accomplished, there were dangers of the most terrible and the most permanent character to be feared. Religious animosities and class antipathies which had long been slumbering might be revived in all their fierceness. The elements of anarchy and agitation which lay only too abundantly in a population poor, ignorant, turbulent, and superstitious beyond almost any in Europe, might be let loose and turned into politics. The Catholics of Ireland, who had hitherto scarcely awakened to political life, and whose leaders had been uniformly loyal, and much more inclined to lean towards the English Government than towards the Irish Parliament, might be permanently alienated from the connection. In the clash of discordant elements, Ireland might be once more cursed with the calamities of civil war; and confiscations and penal laws had placed landed property so exclusively in the hands of the ascendant class, that a danger still graver than rebellion

might be feared. It was that which Burke truly called 'the most irreconcilable quarrel that can divide a nation—a struggle for the landed property of the whole kingdom.'[1]

While the sentiments I have described were rapidly extending among the more intelligent Catholics and among the Presbyterians of the North, the governing classes in Ireland experienced a full measure of that dread of reform and innovation which the French Revolution had made predominant among men in authority. The Catholic question now presented itself to them, not as in 1778 and 1782 as a question of religious toleration, and of the removal of penal inflictions, but as a question of the transfer of political power and of the destruction of an old monopoly of representation. It was also avowedly and ostentatiously associated with the demand for a searching parliamentary reform which would break down the system of nomination boroughs, and establish the representation on a broad popular basis. No prospect could be more alarming to the small group of men who controlled the Government and almost monopolised the patronage of Ireland. The Chancellor, Fitzgibbon, was steadily opposed to all concessions to the Catholics, and he devoted his great ability and his arrogant but indomitable will to rallying the party of the Opposition. The Beresfords, the Elys, and several other of the great borough owners, and in general the officials who were most closely connected with the Castle, were equally violent in their opposition.

In England, however, different motives were at work. Pitt and the majority of the other ministers were free from every vestige of religious intolerance, and the events of the French Revolution had thrown them into close alliance with the Catholics of Europe. It was not

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 81.

merely a question of political alliance but of genuine sympathy, for Catholicism was the most natural and most powerful moral force that could be opposed to that spirit of antichristian revolution which was now assuming such a menacing aspect in Europe. The overtures made by the revolutionary Protestant Dissenters to the Catholics justly appeared very alarming to the English ministers. Hitherto it had been their policy to act as the champion or at least the protector of the Catholics; not, indeed, risking any serious convulsion for their sake, but on the whole favouring the abolition of the penal laws, moderating their administration, protecting the Catholics from local tyranny. There seemed now some danger that a power which was naturally conservative might be thrown into the opposite scale, and that the Catholic relief question, which the ministers were inclined to favour, might be employed to obtain a parliamentary reform to which they were strongly opposed. It appeared, therefore, to the English Ministers a matter of great importance to break this incipient alliance, and by giving greater weight to the Catholics to turn them into a conservative influence in the Constitution.

There were two other considerations which had great weight. In the first place the question of the position of the English Catholics had been again taken up. The circumstances of Catholicism in England and Ireland were entirely different, but experience had shown that legislation on this subject in one country was tolerably sure to be followed by a demand for legislation in the other.

I have already related[1] the history of Mitford's Act, which in 1791 relieved English Catholics who took the oath provided by the statute, from all the laws against recusancy which had been passed under Elizabeth and James I.; restored them to a full right of celebrating

[1] *History of England*, vi. 38–46.

their worship and educating their children; permitted them to be barristers, solicitors, attorneys, clerks, and notaries, and freed them from several petty and vexatious restrictions to which they had been liable. This measure, as we have seen, was carried with the concurrence of both sections in the Parliament, and it naturally strengthened the claim of the Irish Catholics for a larger measure of relief.

Another circumstance which was favourable to the Catholic cause was the influence of Edmund Burke, who had just broken away from the old Opposition and entered into alliance with the Government. Burke had himself married a Catholic lady, and his sympathies with his Catholic countrymen were both strong and steady. As early as 1765 he had treated of their wrongs in his 'Tracts upon the Popery Code,' and he recurred to the subject in writings in 1778, in 1780, and in 1782.[1] At the time of which I am now writing he was, perhaps, in the zenith of his influence. In 1790 his 'Reflections on the French Revolution' had appeared, and it exercised a greater influence than any political writing in England, at least since the days of Swift. He was regarded as the foremost advocate and representative of Conservative principles in England, and his voice was therefore especially weighty when he supported a measure of reform.

In his letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, which was written and published in the beginning of 1792, and still more in his private correspondence, his policy was clearly disclosed. He was prepared to go as far as a complete or almost complete removal of incapacities, 'but leisurely, by degrees, and portion by portion.'[2] He urged the absolute necessity of blending the two great sections of the Irish people, the extreme danger

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 39.

[2] *Correspondence*, iii. 529.

as well as the extreme injustice of maintaining a system of permanent political monopoly, the certainty that such a system must one day break down, the danger of persuading the Catholics that their only hope of entering the Constitution was by the assistance of democratic Dissenters. 'If you should make this experiment at last,' he wrote, 'under the pressure of any necessity, you never can do it well.' 'At present you may make the desired admission without altering the system of your representation in the smallest degree or in any part. You may leave that deliberation of a parliamentary change or reform, if ever you should think fit to engage in it, uncomplicated and unembarrassed with the other question;' you may 'measure your concessions' and proceed by degrees without 'unfixing old interests' at once. 'Reflect seriously on the possible consequences of keeping in the hearts of your community a bank of discontent, every hour accumulating, upon which every description of seditious men may draw at pleasure.'

The difficulties and dangers of the question, if it was taken up at once and in the spirit that has been indicated, seemed to him enormously exaggerated. He reminded Langrishe that the English Parliament had very recently given to Canada a popular representative by the choice of the landholders, and an aristocratic representative at the choice of the Crown, and that no religious disqualification was introduced in either case. It was said that the Irish Catholics had been reduced by the long depression of the law to the state of a mob, and that 'whenever they came to act many of them would act exactly like a mob, without temper, measure, or foresight.' If that be the case, ought not Irish statesmen to apply at once 'a remedy to the real cause of the evil'? 'If the disorder you speak of be real and considerable, you ought to raise an aristocratic interest,

that is, an interest of property and education, amongst them, and to strengthen by every prudent means the authority and influence of men of that description.' It was one excellence of our Constitution, that elective rights are always attached rather to property than to person. In Ireland the standard of qualification may be too low or not judiciously chosen, and it may be a question whether it may not be prudent 'to raise a step or two the qualifications of the Catholic voters.' For his own part, however, he doubted it. 'If you were to-morrow to put the Catholic freeholder on the footing of the most favoured forty-shilling Protestant freeholder, you know that such is the actual state of Ireland, this would not make a sensible alteration in almost any *one* election in the kingdom. The effect in their favour even defensively would be infinitely slow.'[1] In the present state of Europe, he argued, 'it is of infinite moment that matters of grace should emanate from the old sovereign authority.'

His estimate of the different parties in Ireland is curious and far from complimentary. The difference between the Irish Protestant and the Irish Catholic appeared to him to be mainly that between 'the cat looking out of the window, and the cat looking in at the window,' between 'being in or out of power.' The Protestants had been somewhat specially corrupted by the long monopoly of 'jobbish power,' and the Catholics by continued habits of servility.[2] On both sides religious animosity was almost extinct, and he actually suggested that it was quite within the limits of probability that in the general decadence of theology the Catholics might, through political reasons, be converted into Protestant Dissenters.[3] Their clergy, he thought, had at no time

[1] Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.
[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 435.
[3] Letter to Langrishe.

within his observation much influence over their people. 'I have never known an instance (until a few of them were called into action by the manœuvres of the Castle), that in secular concerns they took any part at all. . . . Though not wholly without influence . . . they have rather less than any other clergy I know.'[1] As for the Protestants, they have lost most of their old prejudices. 'They are jobbers as their fathers were, but with this difference, their fathers had false principles. The present race, I suspect, have none. . . . They have a reasonable share of good nature. If they could be once got to think that the Catholics were human creatures, and that they lost no job by thinking them such, I am convinced that they would soon, very soon indeed, be led to show some regard for their country.'[2] The difficulty of inducing them to give full political privileges to Catholics lay chiefly in the selfish interests of a small junto of monopolists. In a curiously candid letter to his son, he expressed his wish that the Catholics would 'leave off' the topic of which some of them are so fond, that of attributing the continuance of their grievances to English interests or dispositions, to which they suppose the welfare of Ireland is sacrificed.' No notion, he declared, could be more groundless. Englishmen were perfectly indifferent to the question whether Catholics had or had not a share in the election of members of the Irish Parliament. 'Since the independency (and even before) the jobs of that Government are almost wholly in their hands.' 'I have never known any of the successive Governments in my time, influenced by any [other] passion relative to Ireland than the wish that they should hear of it and of its concerns as little as possible.' 'The present set of ministers partake of that disposition in a larger measure than any of their

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 12. [2] Ibid. iii. 438, 439.

predecessors with whom I have been acquainted,' and the whole Government of Ireland has been willingly left to 'a junto of jobbers.'[1]

The peculiar position of Edmund Burke led the Catholic Committee to take a step of much importance. They had for some time been accustomed to seek literary and other help outside their own body, and they now determined to ask Richard Burke, the only son of Edmund Burke, to act as their paid adviser. He was a practising barrister, and his selection as the professional representative of the Catholics seemed a most effectual answer to those who accused them of sympathising with the French Revolution, and was at the same time likely to enlist in the cause the influence, the counsel, and perhaps the pen of a man who had then great weight with the ministers, and a supreme influence over English public opinion.

The appointment was made in August 1790, before the separation of Lord Kenmare and his party from the Catholic Committee, but the services of Richard Burke appear at first to have been exclusively literary, and they did not prevent him from proceeding to Coblentz on a mission to the French princes, who were in that city.[2] On his return, however, towards the close of 1791 he was at once invited to take a more active part, and especially to solicit the ministers in behalf of the Catholics.[3] In the course of December he had conversations on the subject with Dundas, and also with Hobart, who had for a short time come over from Ireland. He was instructed by the Catholic Committee to ask that the Roman Catholics might be admitted to all departments of the law, to the magistracy,

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 525, iv. 28, 29.

[2] Ibid. iii. 154, 490; Macknight's *Life of Burke*, iii. 422, 423.

[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 490.

and to the minor offices of county administration; that they might be entitled to serve in all cases both on grand and petty juries, and that they might obtain the elective franchise, but only in the counties.

Although his talents appear to have been greatly over-estimated by his father, Richard Burke was in truth by no means destitute of ability, but he displayed a rather unusual measure of the common and characteristic faults of amateur diplomatists. His want of tact, his tendency to exaggeration and overstatement, his meddling, officious, and dictatorial demeanour, were soon painfully conspicuous. When he went to Ireland, Dundas warned him that the English Government could hold no communication on the Catholic question except through the Irish Government, and that he must therefore communicate exclusively with it.[1] He easily gathered that the ministers were convinced that it was necessary to grant a measure of relief to the Catholics, in order to win them over to their side. He also gathered clearly that while the ministers were determined to make some concessions, they were disposed to abandon the capital one of the elective franchise, not on account of any English reluctance, but because of the determined hostility among the leading men in the Irish Government and Parliament. These opinions Richard Burke appears to have fully declared, and in the course of a few months' residence in Ireland, he very unduly raised the hopes of the Catholics, flung the Irish Government into a paroxysm of jealousy and anger, entered into negotiation with a number of independent interests in the Irish Parliament, and greatly embarrassed the English Government. In September 1792, the Catholic Committee finally broke with him.

We must now proceed to examine more particularly

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 366.

the real intentions of the Government as disclosed in their secret and confidential correspondence. No portion of this correspondence is more instructive than that which relates to the early period of the Viceroyalty of Westmorland. It shows with great clearness the opposition between the views of the ministers in London, and those of the ministers in Dublin.

In October 1791, when Richard Burke had not yet arrived in Ireland, Lord Grenville wrote to Westmorland that he had been speaking with Hobart and with Parnell, on the subject of the Irish Catholics. He does not announce any conclusion, and writes with evident perplexity, but it is easy to detect the current of his thoughts. 'I am very sensible,' he writes, 'how imperfect my ideas are likely to be on a subject on which so much more local and personal knowledge than I possess are required, in order to enable anyone to form a correct judgment. But I cannot help feeling a very great anxiety that such measures may be taken as may effectually counteract the union between the Catholics and Dissenters, at which the latter are evidently aiming. I may be a false prophet, but there is no evil that I would not prophesy if that union takes place in the present moment, and on the principles on which it is endeavoured to bring it about.'[1]

During several months, the English Government had been receiving from Lord Westmorland alarming accounts of the incendiary papers that were being circulated in Ireland; of the renewed activity of the Catholic question, and especially of the determined

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Grenville to Westmorland, Oct. 20, 1791. *Westmorland Papers.* Many of the letters of 1791 and 1792, cited in the following pages, are not in the Record Office. They come from a very valuable and interesting collection of papers of Lord Westmorland, which was kindly lent me by the owner, Sir S. Ponsonby Fane. They have since been given by him to the State Paper Office in Dublin, where they now are.

efforts to unite the questions of Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform, and to combine in a single league the Northern Dissenters with the Catholics. At length on December 26, 1791, Dundas wrote to Westmorland two very remarkable letters—one of them intended to be laid before the Irish Council, and the other strictly confidential—conveying the policy of the English Government. In the former letter he began by expressing the great concern with which the Government had observed the recent attempts to associate together persons of different religious denominations in Ireland for seditious purposes, and his hopes that the Catholics would repudiate all attempts to seduce them from that 'quiet and regular demeanour,' to which past favours were due, and from which alone future indulgences might be justly expected. At the same time he announced the opinion of the confidential servants of the King, that 'it is essentially necessary, as well on grounds of justice as of sound policy, to give a favourable ear to the fair claims of the Catholics of Ireland,' and he directed the Lord Lieutenant to use 'his best endeavours to obtain a consideration of this subject divested of the prejudices arising from former animosities, the original grounds of which seem no longer to exist.' 'The Roman Catholics,' he adds, 'form the great body of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Ireland, and as such are entitled to the communication of all such advantages as can be given them without danger to the existing establishments and to the general interests of the Empire.' Their conduct for a long series of years, as well as the interest which they have acquired in property, make it very unlikely that they would 'act on those principles on which their original exclusion was founded. It is, therefore, well worthy of serious consideration how far it is wise for those who look forward to the preservation of the present frame of the Irish Government, to run the

risk of exciting a dangerous antipathy against that frame of Government in the minds of the great body of the people, who by the present laws are secluded from . . . any right to vote even in the election of representatives for counties.' The newly acquired importance and independence of the Irish Parliament makes this exclusion especially galling, and in the opinion of the English Ministers it is much more dangerous to the Protestant interest than such 'a moderate and qualified participation' in the right of election as would give them a stake in the political prosperity of the country.

At the same time, while very powerfully urging the arguments in defence of this position, Dundas does not impose it on the confidential servants of the Crown in Ireland 'in the shape of a decision.' It is the genuine opinion of the English Ministers. It is an opinion they greatly wish to see adopted by the Irish Protestants, but if 'the sentiments of the leading descriptions of persons in the Irish Parliament should be decidedly adverse to this proposal at present,' he insists only that 'at least the door should not be understood to be finally shut against the Catholics, if hereafter men's minds should become reconciled to the extension of further privileges, and if *their* conduct should afford fresh ground for thinking that such privileges may be given with safety.' In order to secure Ireland against dangerous and desperate commotions, it is necessary that the Catholics should be fully convinced that any attempts to carry their objects by force or intimidation will be resisted to the utmost, and that peaceful and dutiful conduct will be rewarded by a continuous though gradual improvement of their situation.

This, then, was the position of the English Government on the question of conferring the franchise on the Catholics. But whatever resolution might be adopted on this question at Dublin, the Lord Lieutenant is directed

to inform the confidential servants of the Crown that it is 'the decided opinion' of the English Government that the Roman Catholics of Ireland have a claim, which neither in justice nor policy can be refused, to be at least placed on as favourable a footing as their co-religionists in England. In order to attain this end, the Lord Lieutenant is directed to review the remaining laws against the Catholics, with the object of recommending to the Irish Parliament the repeal of five classes. It was to be asked to repeal all laws which imposed any special obstruction on the Catholics in the exercise of any profession, trade, or manufacture; which restricted the intermarriage of the members of the two creeds; which interfered with the unlimited power of the Catholic father in the mode or place of education of his children; which made a distinction between Protestant and Papist in the use of arms, and which prevented them from serving either on grand or petty juries.[1]

The official despatch was accompanied by a private and very significant letter, intended for the eye of the Lord Lieutenant alone. Under ordinary circumstances, wrote Dundas, the Irish Government and Protestant interest have a right to look for the support and protection of Great Britain, but they must not push this expectation too far. 'The public and the Parliament of Great Britain should feel that the object for which their aid is demanded is one in which they are interested or in which, at least, the Irish Government is founded in justice and policy, in resisting the wishes of the body of the people of Ireland. If it is a mere question whether one description of Irishmen or another are to enjoy a monopoly or pre-eminence,' these conditions will not be fulfilled, and English opinion will not justify the application of English resources for the purpose of

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Dec. 26, 1791.

keeping the Irish Catholics in a continued state of political proscription. Besides this, the country may soon be at war, and if the Catholic grievances are then unredressed, it is tolerably certain that an attempt will be made to extort by force what is denied as a matter of grace. The example of the volunteers is but too plain, and Catholics had their part in the triumph of 1782. In conclusion Dundas gave it as his decided opinion, 'that there cannot be a permanency in the frame of the Government and Constitution of Ireland unless the Protestants will lay aside their prejudices, forego their exclusive pre-eminence, and gradually open their arms to the Roman Catholics, and put them on the same footing with every other species of Dissenter.'[1]

The policy indicated in these despatches appears to me, in its broad lines, both temperate and wise, but it was received by the Lord Lieutenant with absolute consternation. Any intimation to the principal servants of the Crown in Ireland that the English Government contemplated such a policy, would in his opinion be most disastrous, would probably prevent them from making any concessions whatever, and would almost certainly unite them against the Government of Pitt. After some preliminary correspondence, however, with the English Government, he brought the chief points before his Privy Council, and on January 14, 1792, he wrote to the Government the result. Those who were present were Fitzgibbon the Chancellor, the Attorney-General, Beresford, the Archbishop of Cashel, the Prime Serjeant, and Sir John Parnell. Of these persons Beresford and the Archbishop of Cashel appeared on the whole averse to any concessions whatever, but in the end there was a general though hesitating and reluctant assent to the wishes of the Government upon

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Dec. 26, 1891.

the three articles of professions, intermarriage, and education. On the question of juries a reservation was made with reference to grand juries. To admit Catholics into bodies which gave so much consequence and power would be extremely likely to excite the alarm and jealousy of the Protestant gentry, and although such a concession might be abstractly proper, it would be wiser to take no steps till the dispositions of the Irish Parliament had been carefully sounded. The concession of an unlimited right of carrying arms was pronounced to be completely inadmissible. Independently of all religious considerations, it was vitally necessary to the security of the country that the Government should retain the power of disarming the lower classes of the people, who were nearly all Roman Catholics, and exceedingly tumultuous. This was sufficiently proved by 'their numerous insurrections against tithes, the number of forcible possessions, the demolitions of fences which had occurred, their frequent attacks upon revenue officers and escorts, and their numerous rescues of seizures and prisoners.' Every Roman Catholic of decent rank might obtain a licence to carry arms; the law on the subject was never put in force except for the prevention of mischief, and no man could wish to put arms in the hands of the lower class in Ireland, but for the purpose of anarchy and sedition. The situation of the English Catholics was quite different, for they were a very small and highly respectable body, drawn chiefly from the upper and middle classes of society. This point was not 'even mentioned in the application of the Roman Catholics, and the concession would be as much disrelished by the Catholic gentlemen of property as by the Protestants.'

So far, however, the difference between the English and Irish Governments was not very serious. But the question of the propriety of conceding the suffrage to

the Catholics was far more grave. The confidential servants of the Crown not only unanimously pronounced this concession utterly ruinous and impracticable, but they expressed the gravest apprehension and discontent that such a proposal had been so much as considered by the British Cabinet, and an earnest wish that the sentiments of the ministers should be most carefully concealed. The English proposal, if made to Parliament, and by Administration, would occasion such a ferment, both in the House and out of the House, as would totally prevent any of the concessions wished for, and 'it was impossible to foretell to what degree the House of Commons might be affected on the subject, should they imagine such a proposal (and so it would be construed) as an abandonment of the Protestant power, and a sacrifice of it to Catholic claims.'

It was proposed that the suffrage should only be given in the counties, and that the qualification should be higher for Catholics than for Protestants. Such 'a measure of relief was in itself ridiculous and illusory, and would only be deemed the prelude to further demands.' A full concession would necessarily follow. The proposed concession would give the Catholics 'a complete command in the counties, with a few exceptions to northern counties, where the Dissenting interest prevails, and thus put them in possession of the pure and popular part of the representation. By this means they would gradually gain an ascendency, and would soon be enabled to make a successful attack on the tithes and established clergy, so odious to themselves and the Presbyterians, if they should not, indeed, be enabled to go further as their power gradually increased, and with it their hopes and their ambitions;' and the servants of the Crown 'felt and stated their apprehension for the security of the Act of Settlement.' 'I hope,' continued the Lord Lieutenant, 'what I have thus stated

will induce his Majesty's servants in Great Britain entirely to give up all ideas of conceding the elective franchise and the unqualified right of carrying arms, and that I shall receive official information that I may produce, for calming the apprehensions of persons attached to English Government and to the connection between the countries, of their relinquishing these objects. I am fully convinced that no inducement of interest, no plan of intimidation, could in the present temper of the parliamentary mind produce a repeal of the existing laws on these points. . . . There is not one of his Majesty's confidential servants here . . . who does not consider these proposals as equally ruinous to his Majesty's Government and to the Protestant interest, to the connection of the kingdoms and the welfare of the Empire at large.'

Dundas had especially insisted that no language should be employed by the Government intimating that no future concessions should be granted to the Catholics. It is certain, answered Westmorland, that if the right of suffrage should be proposed in the House of Commons from any quarter, it would be impossible to prevent individuals, both in and out of office, from expressing the most decisive declarations. 'It is a fit subject for your consideration whether the friends of Government ought not to have a liberty of concurring in such declarations, if they should appear indispensable, and that the Government would be otherwise left in a trifling minority.' 'I should not act fairly,' he added, 'if I did not at the same time plainly tell you that the first and natural turn of every mind was for resistance *in limine* and *in toto*. Upon the next attempt at concessions you may be assured a stand will be made. And if the suspicion shall be confirmed (a suspicion too much strengthened by your despatch and the questionable language and situation of Mr. Richard Burke),

that the British Government means to take up the Catholics, and to play what is called a Catholic game, and should this suspicion be further corroborated by an instruction in any future session from England to propose the right of suffrage, a stand will be made by the Protestants, without distinction, against the Government, in their own defence. No administration will be able to conduct his Majesty's business without expressly stipulating a different policy, and his Majesty's Government will be laid at the feet of those aristocratic followings which are at present in hostility to it.' [1]

The violent and uncompromising opposition that was declared by the Irish Government to the proposed concession of political rights to the Catholics, naturally alarmed the English Ministers, who had no wish to engage in a campaign from which their servants in Ireland predicted the most dangerous results, and which they represented as certain to be abortive.

Pitt himself, just before the despatch I have last quoted was written, had endeavoured to calm the mind of the Lord Lieutenant, and attenuate the effects of the despatches of Dundas. He was not at all surprised, he said, that the Lord Lieutenant should have found it impossible to bring the friends of the Government in Ireland to go 'further than the line of English concession, and in truth,' he added, 'I believe that will keep everything quiet for a time.' The Government had sug-

[1] Jan. 11, 1792, Westmorland to Dundas. In a letter of private instructions to Hobart, suggesting the arguments to be used in England, Westmorland writes: 'It appears to me by no means impossible we shall be seriously asked by formidable bodies of our Parliament, If we concede at your desire, will England pledge herself to support the Protestant power? If we can answer Yes, they will obey: if a negative or evasive answer is given, they will say, Then let the Protestant interest maintain itself in the way it best can. England has no right to ask us to weaken ourselves by concession, if she intends to abandon us afterwards.' Westmorland to Hobart, Dec. 19, 1791.

gested the idea of granting the suffrage, merely because they were persuaded 'that if the Protestants can in good time be reconciled to this idea, the adopting it may lead more than anything else to the permanent support of the present frame of the Government, and that its being suggested now to the principal friends of Government, though it should not be adopted, might bring them gradually to consider it in this light.' At the same time, if they are decidedly against the concession, the ministers have no wish to press it, but they do think it material 'that no declaration should be made against its being ever done, and that the door should not be considered as shut against such further gradual concession as times and circumstances, and the opinion of the public and Parliament, may hereafter admit. This, accompanied by a firm disposition to resist anything sought by violence, seems to be almost the only security for leading the Catholics to a peaceable behaviour, and for preventing them from joining either now, or if any favourable occasion should arise, with the violent and republican part of the Dissenters.'

He fully acknowledged the duty of the English Government to support on all ordinary occasions the Irish Administration, if necessary, by force. All that was meant by the private letter of Dundas was that, if the Catholic question ever produced a serious conflict 'which might require the exertion of almost the whole force of this country, it would hardly be possible to carry the public here to that point, for the sake of the total exclusion of the Catholics from all participation of political rights; that, therefore, the best way of insuring effectual support from hence would be to get, as soon as possible, upon ground more consonant to what we think would be the public feeling.' The ministers may be mistaken, but they thought it well to suggest this consideration to the Lord Lieutenant and his advisers.

It is, however, mere speculation, and Westmorland need not communicate it unless he thought fit.[1]

Pitt, though not the minister officially in connection with Lord Westmorland, was so evidently and transcendently the guiding spirit of the Government, that it was tolerably certain that his judgment would ultimately prevail, and on January 18, 1792, Westmorland wrote him a long and extremely frank and confidential letter, reviewing the whole Catholic question in its relation to the general government of Ireland. He began by deploring the very serious alarm which the Government despatch, combined with some other circumstances, had raised. 'I cannot,' he adds, 'exactly satisfy my mind upon what point you look in these speculations; whether you imagine the alteration pressed by an immediate and inevitable necessity, whether as a mode of conciliation to prevent present or approaching tumult, or whether by past observation, the power by which England has governed Ireland having been found defective, you mean to introduce a new alliance as an engine of management.'

On the first point he merely observes that 'neither the franchise nor the abolition of distinctions is expected by the Catholics, or pressed by immediate necessity,' though he cannot answer for what may be the effects produced by a knowledge of the sentiments of the English Ministers, and by the suspicious situation and language of Mr. Richard Burke. 'That the concessions would have a tendency to prevent future tumult is against the sentiments of every friend of Government.' It is, indeed, the general belief that their 'increasing power, with their disproportion of numbers, must eventually, either by influence or more probably by force, give the Catholics the upper hand, overturn the Church Establishment first, next proceed to the possession of the State, and the

[1] Jan. 6, 1792, Pitt to Westmorland.

property' which had been obtained through conquest. 'You will observe,' he continues, 'I have written as if it were possible to carry these concessions, but I am convinced you might as well attempt to carry in the English Parliament the abolition of negro slavery, a reform of representation, or an abolition of the House of Lords in the House of Lords, as to carry the Irish Parliament a step towards the franchise. The power of Government against a sentiment prevailing without exception is of no avail. Every man who has regard either to his honour or his interest, would sacrifice his office to his parliamentary or political situation, nor, indeed, would the office be risked, as no successor could be found in such circumstances.' Signs of the growing excitement were plainly visible. Members of Parliament were constantly accosted with the phrase, 'I hope you are a true Protestant and will resist,' and 'The lower Catholics already talk of their ancient family estates.'

The last argument in favour of the enfranchisement of the Catholics, Westmorland examines at greater length, and his words are deserving of a full quotation. 'That the Irish frame of Government,' he wrote, 'like every human institution, has faults is true, but conceiving the object of you and I to be, and which it is only our duty to look to [*sic*], how England can govern Ireland, that is how England can govern a country containing one-half as many inhabitants as herself, and in many respects more advantageously situated, I hold the task not to be easy, but that the present frame of Irish Government (which every man here believes shook by these speculations) is particularly well calculated for our purpose. That frame is a Protestant garrison (in the words of Mr. Burke), in possession of the land, magistracy, and power of the country; holding that property under the tenure of British power and supremacy, and ready at every instant to crush the

rising of the conquered. If under various circumstances their generals should go a little refractory, do you lessen your difficulties or facilitate the means of governing, by dissolving their authority and trusting to your popularity and good opinion with the common soldiers of the conquered? Allegory apart, do you conceive England can govern Ireland by the popularity of the Government? . . . Is not the very essence of your Imperial policy to prevent the interest of Ireland clashing and interfering with the interest of England? You know how difficult it is in England to persuade the popular mind that the Government is acting for the public interest; how can you expect to succeed in Ireland, where practice and appearance must at all times be so plainly against you? . . . Don't tell me that the external power of England could keep her in subjection, or that her interest would keep her in the same link [*sic*]. Much weaker States than Ireland exist in the neighbourhood of mighty kingdoms, and States very often are actuated by other views than their real interest. Reflect what Ireland would be in opposition to England, and you will see the necessity of some very strong interior power or management that will render Ireland subservient to the general orders of the Empire. You know the advantages you reap from Ireland; from what I have stated they may be more negative than positive. In return does she cost you one farthing (except the linen monopoly)? Do you employ a soldier on her account she does not pay, or a single ship more for the protection of the British commerce than if she was at the bottom of the sea? If she was there it might be one thing, but while she exists you must rule her. Count what she would be in opposition. Have you not crushed her in every point that would interfere with British interest or monopoly by means of her Parliament for the last century, till lately? If, as her Government be-

came more open and more attentive to the feelings of the Irish nation, the difficulty of management has increased, is that a reason for opening the Government and making the Parliament more subservient to the feelings of the nation at large? . . . Don't fancy from what I have said that I am averse to cultivating the Catholics, but I cannot understand why a politician should throw away the absolute rule, guidance, and government of an important country to a sect without head or guidance. . . . I am most decidedly of opinion for cultivating the Catholics. I would wish them to look to Government for further indulgence (indeed they can look nowhere else). I would give them every indulgence that is possible to be carried for them that would not revolt the Protestant mind, give offence to the Parliament, and shake the Establishment in the opinion of the King's servants here. If they differed, we might interfere, but their *universal* sentiment ought not and cannot be disregarded; . . . the risk ought not to be run, in courting them, of oversetting the attachment of the Protestant power by which England ever has, and whilst that power is prevalent always may govern Ireland. Do you mean by the fermentation to force the Protestants to a union? To that point I am not prepared to speak. The Catholics may at times be useful to frighten the aristocracy, but in my honest opinion they are an engine too dangerous for speculation. . . . It is hardly necessary I should add that the attempt of the franchise and the abolition of distinctions is impracticable, and ruinous in the attempt. The Protestant mind is so united for resistance that I see no danger but from the opinions of the British Cabinet.'[1]

The arguments of Westmorland were very powerfully supported by his Chief Secretary. Richard Burke,

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Jan. 18, 1792.

he said, by persuading the Catholics that the English Government was no longer prepared to uphold Protestant ascendency, had proved himself the most dangerous incendiary the Irish Administration had ever contended with. Several leading Catholics had already said, how can we be expected to desist from pressing for the suffrage when 'it is thrown at our heads by the ministers of England?' 'Be assured, my dear sir,' continued Hobart, 'that you are on the eve of being driven to declare for the Protestants or Catholics. . . . If you suppose that the Protestants will yield without a struggle, you may be assured that you are misinformed. If you think that Mr. Burke's Catholic party will desist so long as he can persuade them to believe that they are abetted by England, you will find yourself greatly deceived. . . . The connection between England and Ireland rests absolutely upon the Protestant ascendency. Abolish distinctions, and you create a Catholic superiority. If you are to maintain a Protestant ascendency, it must be by substituting influence for numbers. The weight of England in the Protestant scale will at all times turn the balance, but if ever the Catholics are persuaded that the Protestants are not certain of English support, they will instantly think it worth their while to hazard a conflict. It may be said what is it to England whether Catholics or Protestants have the pre-eminence in Ireland? I answer, it is of as much consequence as the connection between the two countries—for on that it depends. Whilst you maintain the Protestant ascendency, the ruling powers in Ireland look to England as the foundation of their authority and influence. The Executive Government of both countries must ever (as it always has been) be under the same control. A Catholic Government could maintain itself without the aid of England, and must inevitably produce a separation of the Executive which would speedily be followed

by a separation between the countries. . . . Be assured that a conviction of the absolute necessity of maintaining the principle of exclusion from the suffrage is so strong in the minds of people here that it will not be conceded, and you will never have this country quiet till some strong and decided language is held by the British Government upon that point.'[1]

'Nothing,' wrote the Under Secretary Cooke a few days later, 'ought to be done for the Catholics this session at all,' and he described the existing situation as 'the British Ministry and Grattan coinciding in the same measures with different views, the one to strengthen, the other to abolish, English influence; the Irish Ministry in opposition to the English in principle, and with them in acquiescence; the supporters of Government seeing ruin to themselves in standing by Administration.'[2]

Hobart went over to England to enforce the views

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[1] Hobart to Dundas, Jan. 17, 1792.

[2] Cooke to Barnard, Jan. 21, 1792. I may add a few sentences from the confidential letter which Westmorland wrote to Hobart, when the latter was in England for the purpose of enforcing the views of the Irish Government. 'What has so much discredited the Irish Parliament in England? Examine the history: have they not without exception been the most convenient engines of British management since the days of King William? . . . The object of England must be to govern Ireland. She has in the present Constitution a Parliament formed of such materials that she always has, and probably always will be able to manage it, and she has a sect, deficient in numbers but possessing the property, magistracy, and influence in the country, pledged to maintain that establishment. Can it be for her advantage to alter the system of Government by bringing forward the Catholics, to throw the weight into the scale of the people and render the Parliament unmanageable? . . . No argument should be left to impress Pitt with the impossibility of depending on the Catholics as a body that could be managed for a length of time, and therefore, though every method should be used to attach them, yet we ought not to risk the decisive management at present possessed by England.' Westmorland to Hobart, Dec. 17, 1791.

of the Irish Administration, and together with Sir John Parnell, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had an interview with Pitt and Dundas, which he described in a letter to Westmorland. Dundas reiterated the argument of his private despatch, that if a civil war broke out, it was very doubtful whether the English Parliament would vote a large sum of money to fight a merely Protestant battle. He acknowledged that the easiest way for England to govern Ireland was through the Protestants, but he thought it difficult to predict how long that system could possibly last. Parnell, who, in addition to his high official position, spoke with the authority of a prominent Irish landowner, assured the English statesman that, 'there was nothing to fear from the Catholics; that they had always receded when met; that he believed the bulk of them perfectly satisfied, and that there would be no dissatisfaction if the subject had not been written upon, and such infinite pains taken to disturb the minds of the people.' For his own part he was so little afraid, that he gladly laid out all his money on his Irish property, and he believed that nothing made the Catholics at this time formidable, except the idea that they were favoured in England. Pitt doubtfully said that 'they must look to a permanent system,' and he desired personal communication with some of the leading Irishmen to consider how far the present system could be maintained. The extremely anti-Catholic spirit which was raging on the Continent had greatly impressed him, and had led him, as it led Burke, into speculations which were curiously characteristic of the time, and signally falsified by the event. 'Dundas and Pitt,' writes Hobart, 'both seemed to assent to an idea which I threw out, of the probability of the present system in Ireland continuing as long as the system of Popery, which every hour was losing ground, and which once annihilated, put an end to the question.' 'I trust

I may add,' Hobart says in concluding the relation, 'that all idea of a Catholic game (if such ever was entertained) is at an end, and that the British Government will decidedly support the Protestant ascendency; which opinion seemed to have been Pitt's from the beginning, and Dundas's ultimately.'[1]

The Irish Government in this conflict with the English Ministers was almost completely successful. The proposal to extend the franchise, and the proposal to extend the use of arms to the Catholics, were both abandoned, and in spite of a strong remonstrance from Dundas,[2] it was determined not to mention the Catholics in the Speech from the Throne. 'Not only members of Parliament,' wrote Westmorland, 'but almost every Protestant in the kingdom was under such alarm that it was not possible to foresee what effect a recommendation of concessions to the Catholics from the Throne might produce.' A report was prevalent, and much credited, that Richard Burke, who had held various communications with the English Ministers as the avowed agent of the Roman Catholics, had 'received assurances from the British Government of their favourable disposition to abolish by degrees all distinctions between Papist and Protestant; and that he had assured the Roman Catholic Committee they could not fail to obtain the right of suffrage if they would be firm.' To mention the subject in the Speech from the Throne would, the Lord Lieutenant declared, deprive the Government of some of its most devoted adherents, 'who had never swerved from supporting the English connection and Government, but who thought that danger to that very connection and Government attended even the smallest concession under the present circumstances.'

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[1] Hobart to Westmorland, Jan. 25, 1792.

[2] Dundas to Westmorland, Jan. 16, 1792.

The alarm, he says, was of the strongest kind. A great meeting of the friends of the Government was only calmed when the Chancellor acquainted them that the Government were determined to resist the demand for arms and franchise. An address in favour of Protestant ascendency was voted by the Corporation of Dublin, and was likely to be re-echoed by every corporate town in the kingdom. 'The general language is still for resistance *in limine* and *in toto*, except among the friends of Administration, who have sacrificed their private judgments to the wishes of the British Government. . . . I am fully persuaded that if they believed there was an intention of going further, all their disposition to concession would be entirely at an end.' It was quite necessary, Westmorland urged, 'to calm the minds of Protestant gentlemen by official assurances from his Majesty's ministers in Great Britain that they have no intention at all, of pressing future concessions,' and also by an official contradiction of the language said to have been used by Mr. Burke. If gentlemen are not satisfied on these points, 'it will not be possible to prevent declarations against future concessions, or, as you term it, to shut the door against the Catholics.' This policy Westmorland considered not only necessary but safe, and he had no belief in an alliance of the Catholics with the Dissenters. The great body of the Dissenters appeared to him hostile to the Catholic views. The principal Catholic landowners were separated from the Committee in Dublin, and only a decisive declaration of the ministers against future concessions was needed to restore the confidence which had been lost.[1]

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[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 21, 1792. Three days later Westmorland wrote: 'The Protestant flame in this country grows hotter and hotter, and our difficulties increase. I am very much afraid we shall not be able to carry the smallest concession.' (To Dundas, Jan. 24.) On Feb. 12 he wrote to the same correspondent:

The English Government yielded with little modification to the desires of their representatives in Ireland. Pitt wrote to Westmorland with an evident wish to allay the storm, though conveying no less evidently that if the Irish politicians would accept a more liberal policy they would be fully supported by England. He was perfectly satisfied, he said, with the points of relief to the Catholics, to which the friends of the Government in Ireland seemed disposed to agree ; but he regrets to gather from the despatches of Westmorland, and from other circumstances, that there is an impression in Ireland that the English Ministers are influenced by some feeling of resentment towards the Protestant interest in Ireland, or by suggestions of Edmund Burke, arising from his supposed partiality to the Catholic persuasion. These suspicions are totally unfounded. No desire of subverting the Protestant interest ever entered into their minds, and they had never had 'a syllable of communication' with the elder Burke on the subject. 'The idea of our wishing to play what you call a *Catholic game* is really extravagant. We have thought only of what was the most likely plan to preserve the security and tranquillity of a British and Protestant interest. . . . Our communications with Mr. R. Burke you must know from Hobart. . . . His intemperance is, I am afraid, likely enough to do harm to any cause. In the present situation I am so far from wishing you to go further than you propose, that I really think it would be unwise to attempt it. . . . My opinion will never be for bringing forward any concession, beyond what the public mind and the opinion of those who are the

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'Though the Parliament and public may be reconciled to our Bill, the determination not to grant anything further, and to publish a declaration at no time to grant the franchise, is so violent and so absurd, that I fear it will not be possible to prevent a declaration of this nature in some shape or other.'

supporters of British Government on its present establishment are reconciled to. I may have my own opinion as to expediency, but I am inclined myself to follow theirs, not to attempt to force it.' On one point, however, Pitt stood firm against the wishes of the Irish Government. 'Any pledge, however, against anything more in future, seems to me to be in every view useless and dangerous; and it is what on such a question no prudent Government can concur in. I say nothing on the idea of resisting all concession, because I am in hopes there is no danger of that line being taken. If it were, I should really think it the most *fatal measure that could be contrived, for the destruction ultimately of every object we wish to preserve.*'[1]

Dundas, whose letters appear to me to show a stronger and more earnest interest in Irish affairs than those of Pitt, wrote in the same sense. 'He regretted,' he said, 'the agitations which had been produced in Ireland;' but added, 'As British Ministers we could not give it as our opinion that the Parliament of Ireland ought to give less under the present circumstances to the Catholics of Ireland, than the British Parliament had given to the Catholics of England, not considering these concessions as involving in them anything that could be dangerous to Ireland;' but the English Ministers had no wish to recommend any concessions, if all the King's servants in Ireland object to them. 'We have recommended them because it is in our opinion impolitic to deny them; but beyond the wishing success to an opinion which we entertain, we can have no other bias, and certainly can have no interest separate from that of Ireland.' He insists only that the Irish Government must not 'tie up its future conduct' by declarations on the Catholic question. As far as the franchise

[1] Pitt to Westmorland, Jan. 29, 1792.

was concerned, English Ministers had never done more than suggest to the Irish Protestants the propriety of considering it. 'There is not a wish expressed on our part, that they should go one step beyond the dictates of their own judgment.' In a second letter, written on the same day, and intended for the eye of Westmorland alone, he added: 'The ministers have some reason to complain of the spirit and temper which have manifested themselves in the deliberations of your friends in Ireland on this business. If they had stated any disposition, at the beginning of it, that we should not communicate with them upon it, we certainly could not have entertained a wish to do so, but should have been extremely well pleased to leave the discussion and decision of it to themselves. But during the whole course of the summer and autumn, they have, in various ways, conveyed to us an apprehension of a union between the Catholics and Dissenters which they considered, and justly considered, as fatal to the present frame of Irish Government. Under these circumstances our opinions were expected. We accordingly gave that opinion, but without any disposition to press the adoption. . . . It is impossible to fathom by the utmost stretch of ingenuity what motive or interest we could have, either to entertain or give an opinion, except what was dictated by an anxious concern for the security of the Irish Establishment, and whether our opinions are right or wrong, time only can determine.'[1]

In reviewing the correspondence from which I have so largely quoted, the reader will, I think, be struck with the eminently moderate and liberal views of the English Government, nor can that Government, in my opinion, be justly blamed for abandoning its first scheme of extending in 1792 the suffrage to Catholics. Person-

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Jan. 29, 1792.

ally, Pitt knew very little about Ireland, and ministers are always obliged to rely chiefly on their confidential servants for their knowledge of the situation. If it was impossible at this time to carry the extension of the franchise to the Catholics, or if it could only have been carried at the expense of a great social and political convulsion, and a serious alienation of the Protestants, the ministers were quite right in abandoning it. It was, however, always maintained by Grattan, Burke, and the other leading advocates of the Catholics, that the representations of Irish Protestant opinion sent over to England were either absolutely false, or at least enormously overstated. The Chancellor and a small group of great noblemen and prelates, who formed the chief advisers of the Lord Lieutenant, were violently hostile to Catholic enfranchisement ; they saw in it the subversion of their own ascendency, and they had therefore the strongest motives to exaggerate its difficulties. 'We hear from all hands,' wrote Burke in January 1792, 'that the Castle has omitted nothing to break that line of policy, which Government has pursued, as opportunity offered, from the beginning of the present reign—that, I mean, of wearing out the vestiges of conquest, and settling all descriptions of people on the bottom of our protecting and constitutional system. But by what I learn, the Castle has another system, and considers the outlawry (or what, at least, I look on as such) of the great mass of the people, as an unalterable maxim in the Government of Ireland.'[1] His son declared that the violent party in the House of Commons consisted of not more than 100 men, and that most of these were in office.[2]

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 378.

[2] Ibid. 463. 'Whatever difficulties,' Richard Burke added, 'there may be in carrying a measure of effectual relief for

The chief members of the Irish Government made it their deliberate object to revive the religious animosities which had so greatly subsided, to raise the standard of Protestant ascendency, and to organise through the country an opposition to concession. How little religious bigotry there had of late been in the great body of the Irish Protestants was clearly shown by the facility with which the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 were carried; by the resolutions in favour of the Catholics passed by the volunteers, who more than any other body represented the uninfluenced sentiments of the Protestants of Ireland; by the recent attitude of the Presbyterians and especially of Belfast, which was the centre of the most decided Protestantism. That these sentiments, in spite of the exertions of the Castle, were not yet very materially changed appears to me conclusively proved by the fact that the concession of Catholic franchise, which was pronounced utterly impossible in 1792, was carried without the smallest difficulty in 1793, and by the fact that nothing but the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam prevented the admission of Catholics into the Irish Parliament in 1795. There were, no doubt, some independent opponents of great weight. The Speaker was strongly opposed to the Catholic claims, and so was Sir Edward Newenham, who had been prominent among the followers of Flood; but the strength of the Opposition consisted mainly of placemen under the leadership of Fitzgibbon.[1]

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the Catholics on account of the supposed reluctance of the Protestants (which, however, is infinitely exaggerated), those difficulties were, in a great measure, if not altogether, created by the Irish Government . . . by becoming, as it were, the champions of a Protestant interest, and by entering into and inflaming the passions and prejudices of that party. This is the real cause of the opposition the Catholics have had to encounter.'—Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 462.

[1] 'I do not believe there was ever an instance in any country, of such a sacrifice of private

Fitzgibbon was the first Irishman to whom Westmorland hinted the intentions of the Government, and Fitzgibbon was opposed to all further concessions to Catholics. The chief borough owners connected with Government agreed with him, and although they could not prevent the introduction of a Relief Bill in 1792, they succeeded in greatly limiting its provisions, and in depriving it of the grace and authority of a Government measure. It was seconded, indeed, by Hobart, but it was introduced by Sir Hercules Langrishe, a private member, though a steady supporter of the Government, and one of the oldest and steadiest friends of the Catholics. It enabled the Catholics to be attorneys, solicitors, notaries, and attorneys' clerks, and to practise at the bar, though they could not rise to the position of King's counsel or judge. It repealed the laws prohibiting barristers from marrying Catholics, and solicitors from educating their children as Catholics; the laws of William and Anne directed against the intermarriage of Catholics and Protestants; the obsolete Act against foreign education; and the equally obsolete clause of the Act of 1782, which made the licence of the ordinary necessary for Catholic schools; and finally it removed all restrictions on the number of apprentices permitted to Catholic trade.

The concessions fell far short of the Catholic expectations, but the ascendency spirit which had been evoked, stimulated, and supported by the Administration, now ran very high.[1] A petition of the Catholics

judgment to the wishes of his Majesty, as by the Irish Ministers in the present concession.' Westmorland to Dundas (private), Feb. 13, 1792.

[1] Grattan, in 1793, reviewing this period, said: The most unfortunate error of our ministry was their interference with grand juries against the Catholics. . . . They took the lead in fomenting a religious war; they began it; they acted in the mongrel capacity of country gentlemen and ministers. They acted against the Catholics as country gentle-

asking for 'some share of the elective franchise,' and a petition of the Protestant United Irishmen of Belfast asking for the repeal of all the anti-Catholic laws, were received at first by the House of Commons, but after they had been laid on the table they were rejected by large majorities. The proceeding was exceedingly unusual and offensive, and it did much to cement the union between the Catholics and the reformers of the North.

The Catholic Committee endeavoured to allay the ferment by publishing a declaration of belief similar to that which had lately been published in England, abjuring some of the more obnoxious tenets ascribed to them, and corroborated by opinions of foreign universities;[1] and they also published in February 1792 a remarkable address to the Protestants denying formally that their application for relief extended to 'unlimited and total emancipation,' and that their applications had ever been made in a tone of menace. They asked only, they said, for admission to the profession and practice of the law; for capacity to serve as county magistrates; for a right to be summoned and to serve on grand and petty juries, and for a very small share of the county franchise. They desired that a Catholic should be allowed to vote for a Protestant county member, but only if in addition to the forty-shilling freehold, which was the qualification of the Protestant voter, he rented or cultivated a farm of the value of twenty pounds a year, or possessed a freehold of that value.[2] Under

men, and encouraged the Protestants as ministers. They had, I understand, informed the British Ministry that the influence of the Crown could not induce a majority to vote against the Catholic pretensions, and then they themselves took a leading part to make that difficulty in the country, which they complained of in their despatches.'—*Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 10.

[1] See *History of England*, vi. 40, 41 Plowden, ii. (appendix) 179–181.

[2] See Grattan's *Life*, iv. 54, 55.

these conditions the Catholic voters would be a small minority in the counties, while they were absolutely excluded from the boroughs. The demand for a limited county franchise was not a mere question of power or politics. The disfranchisement of the Catholic farmers, it was said, was a most serious practical grievance, for in the keen competition for political power which had arisen since the Octennial Bill, and still more since the Declaration of Independence, landlords in letting their farms constantly gave a preference to tenants who could support their interest at the hustings. Catholic leaseholders at the termination of their leases were continually ejected in order to make room for voters, or they were compelled to purchase the renewal of their leases on exorbitant terms.[1]

The Committee strongly protested against the notion that the property, respectability, and loyalty of the Catholics were on the side of Lord Kenmare and the seceders. All the great mercantile fortunes were with the Committee, and it was one of the results of the penal laws that the wealth of the Catholics was mainly mercantile. The property, they said, of those who signed the resolutions of the Committee certainly amounted to ten millions, and was probably more near to twenty millions. Even in landed property the party of the Committee claimed to possess the larger aggregate, though the aristocracy and the largest single estates were on the side of the seceders. They at the same time asserted their loyalty in the strongest terms, and they denied that any principle of sedition lurked among the Catholics in any corner of Ireland.

They took another step which marks the rapid growth of independence in the Catholic body. They issued a circular letter inviting the Catholics in every

[1] Plowden, ii. (appendix) 209, 210, 218.

parish in Ireland to choose electors, who, in their turn, were in every county to choose delegates to the Catholic Committee in Dublin, in order to assist in procuring 'the elective franchise, and an equal participation in the benefits of trial by jury.' This step was evidently imitated from the Conventions of Dungannon, but nothing of the kind had ever appeared, or, indeed, been possible among the Irish Catholics since the era of the penal laws began. The Catholic prelates were much opposed to it,[1] and its legality was at first questioned, but the opinions of two eminent counsel in its favour were obtained and circulated. It excited, however, the greatest alarm in the circle of the Government, and the grand juries in most of the counties of Ireland passed resolutions strongly censuring it. Some meetings of Protestant freeholders followed the example, and the Corporation of Dublin repudiated in the strongest terms the policy of their member Grattan, and declared that 'the Protestants of Ireland would not be compelled *by any authority whatever* to abandon that political situation which their forefathers won with their swords, and which is therefore their birthright.' They defined the Protestant ascendency which they pledged themselves to maintain as 'a Protestant King of Ireland, a Protestant Parliament, a Protestant hierarchy, Protestant electors and Government, the benches of justice, the army and the revenue through all their branches and details Protestant; and this system supported by a connection with the Protestant realm of England.'[2]

It is, I think, undoubtedly true, that a wave of genuine alarm and opposition to concession at this time passed over a great part of Protestant Ireland. The democratic character the Catholic question had assumed;

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 27; Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 65.

[2] Macnevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 29.

the attempts of the northern Dissenters to unite with the Catholics on the principles of the French Revolution; the well-founded belief that some of the new Catholic leaders were in sympathy and correspondence with the democratic leaders; the incendiary newspapers and broadsides which were widely circulated, urging the Catholics to rest content with nothing short of the possession of the State; the outrages of the Defenders to which a more or less political significance was attached, and finally the great dread of innovation which the French Revolution had everywhere produced in the possessors of power, influenced many minds.[1] At the same time the significance to be attached to the resolutions of the grand juries may be easily overrated. As I have already remarked, those bodies in the eighteenth century were very different from what they are in the present day. They were then constituted on the narrowest principles. They were notorious for their jobbing and for most of the vices that spring from monopoly, and they had, therefore, every reason to dread any measure which would infuse into them a new and more popular element. They were also to a very unusual extent under the influence of a few great territorial families connected with the Government and susceptible to Government inspiration. The word had evidently gone forth from the Castle that this machine was to be set in motion against the Catholics. The

[1] Thus Burke, writing in Sept. 1792, mentions that Grattan and Hutchinson had both been visiting him. 'They say that the ascendants are as hot as fire, and that they who think like them are in a manner obliged to decline lla society.' Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 530. Westmorland wrote to Pitt, Feb. 24, 1792: 'Grattan has completely ruined himself for some time, in the opinion of the House of Commons as well as all the Protestants of the country. We reap the benefit of his indiscretion, and if Mr. Grattan continues this theme, I almost flatter myself the support of English Government will become popular in the country.' See, too, Grattan's *Life*, iv. 62.

grand jury of Limerick acted under the immediate influence of the Chancellor, and that of the county of Louth under the influence of the Speaker, and these appear to have chiefly led the movement. It must be added, too, that although at least fifteen grand juries joined in the protest, there were several which refused to do so; that in Mayo ten dissentient jurors protested against the resolution of the majority; and that while some of the grand juries accused the Catholics of endeavouring to overawe the Legislature and subvert the connection, and expressed themselves hostile to all concessions of political power, others contented themselves with describing the Convention as inexpedient, and breathed a spirit of marked conciliation towards the Catholics.

A few sentences from a paper drawn up by Richard Burke, towards the close of 1792, show his estimate of the movement. 'The Irish Government,' he says, 'gave me plainly to understand that they had come to an unalterable determination that the Catholics should not enjoy any share in the constitutional privileges, either now or at any future time.' They soon began 'to set up the Protestant against the Catholic interest, and to exasperate and provoke it by the revival of every sort of animosity, jealousy, and alarm. . . . Addresses were carried about by the known connections and dependants of the Castle from parish to parish, to obtain the signatures of the lowest of the people, and even marks of those who could not write. . . . The Irish Ministers endeavoured to inflame the Protestants against the Catholics, by an accusation which they knew to be false and believed to be impossible, viz. a supposed junction with factious persons of other descriptions, for the purpose of destroying the Church and State, and introducing a pure democracy. . . . Newspapers and publications paid for by, and written under the sanction

of the Castle, were filled with the vilest scurrility against their persons and characters. Every calumny which bigotry and civil war had engendered in former ages was studiously revived. . . . Every man, nearly in proportion to his connection with or dependence upon the Castle (and few of any other sort) expressed the most bitter, I may say bloody, animosities against the Catholics. This temper was nowhere discouraged. An address was procured from the Corporation of Dublin, absolute creatures of the Castle, the purport of which was to perpetuate the disfranchisement of the Catholics. It was carried up with the most ostentatious and offensive parade to the Castle (where an entertainment was prepared for the addressers), through the streets of Dublin, a city in which three-fourths of the people are Catholics. . . . No ministerial member spoke during the whole session without throwing some aspersion either on the cause or on the persons. . . . None but ministerial persons, except Mr. Sheridan, showed any disrespect or virulence to the Catholics.'[1]

The debates on the question in Parliament extended to great length, and are exceedingly instructive. Several members urged with much force the absolute necessity to the well-being of the country, of gradually putting an end to the system according to which theological opinions formed the line of political division and the ground of political proscription. From the long period which had elapsed since the confiscations; from the extinction or expatriation of most of the descendants of the old proprietors; from the uniform loyalty shown by the Catholics during the past century, and from the great quantity of Catholic money which had been accumulated, and invested directly or indirectly in land, they inferred that it could be neither the wish nor the

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 100–105.

interest of the Catholics to shake the settled arrangements of property. They acknowledged that a new and democratic spirit had arisen in Ireland, and that very dangerous doctrines had been propounded among the Presbyterians of the North, but they contended that the Catholics were still untouched. The complete absence of political disaffection among them, which appears so strange, and at first sight so incredible, to those who are aware of the profound and virulent hostility to England which now animates the great body of their descendants, was again and again asserted. They had remained, it was said, perfectly passive during two Jacobite rebellions, and during five foreign wars, and Hely Hutchinson emphatically declared that, though he had been in the confidence of successive Irish Governments for no less than fifty years, he had never heard of any Catholic rising or intended rising of a political nature.[1] In Ireland, as in all other countries, the Catholic gentry and priesthood looked with horror on the French Revolution, and nothing but a belief that political enfranchisement was only to be obtained by the assistance of the revolutionary party, was ever likely to throw a population of devout Catholics into its arms.

The Catholic question, however, was not, it was said, one that could be safely adjourned. Hitherto, the Presbyterian propagandism had been ineffectual, but who could tell how long it would continue so? England was now at peace, but she would probably soon be at war, and Ireland was likely to require all the energies of a united people to defend herself against invasion. A long-continued resistance would inevitably band the people into hostile camps, and revive those religious animosities which had formerly proved so calamitous. A habit of jealously scrutinising the relations of governors

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 256, 257.

to the governed had since the French Revolution become the characteristic disposition of the time, and the American contest had established a doctrine about the connection between taxation and representation, which was glaringly inconsistent with the present position of the Catholics. If the question remained long unsettled, argued one member,[1] with a remarkable prescience, it might some day to the infinite disadvantage of Ireland become an English party question, bandied to and fro according to English party interests. The extension of the franchise was the natural continuation of the policy of 1778 and 1782, and it was a policy which was amply justified by experience. It was the religious animosities, divisions, and incapacities that followed the Revolution that reduced the Irish Parliament to complete impotence, and rendered possible the destruction of Irish commerce. It was the subsidence of those animosities that led to the recovery of commercial freedom, and the acquisition of the Constitution of 1782. Without the co-operation of the two great sections of the Irish people, it was very doubtful whether that Constitution could be maintained, almost impossible that the gross abuses of the representative body could be removed. The fear of the Pretender, which was the original cause of the disfranchisement of the Catholics, had wholly passed, and the alarms for Protestant ascendency were greatly exaggerated. Political power, it was said, belongs naturally to the educated and wealthier classes of a nation; under the British Constitution it lies mainly with the possessors of landed property. Protestant ascendency rested on the fact that the land of Ireland belonged chiefly to Protestants; on the overwhelming weight which the English connection gave to Protestantism; on the coronation oath, which established the perpetuity of the

[1] Forbes.

Church. Considering the manner in which property was held in Ireland, the limited participation of the franchise which was demanded was never likely to affect seriously the balance of power. Catholics had actually sat in the Irish Parliament for more than one hundred and sixty years after the Reformation, and they had not been legally deprived of their right of voting at elections till the reign of George I.

Nor was Popery any longer what it had been. Like Pitt and Burke, the Irish legislators believed that the intellectual and political influences which culminated in the French Revolution were leading to its complete and speedy transformation. Grattan, especially, urged that in the present state of belief, men do not act politically in religious combinations, and that where it appears to be otherwise, it is not the religion, but the disability, which unites them. 'The spirit of the Catholic religion,' said Colonel Hutchinson, 'is softened and refined, . . . the power of the Pope is overthrown in France, tottering in Germany, resisted in Italy, and formidable nowhere. . . . The Catholics will forget to be bigots as soon as the Protestants shall cease to be persecutors.' 'The power of the Pope,' said Grattan, 'is extinct. The sting of the Catholic faith is drawn.' 'If Popery should go down for twenty years more,' said Day, 'as it did the last twenty years, there would remain little difference between Papists and Protestants but in name.' 'The old dangers of Popery,' said Langrishe, 'which used to alarm you, are now to all intents and purposes extinct, and new dangers have arisen in the world against which the Catholics are your best and natural allies.'

The persuasion that the introduction of the Catholics would lead to the overthrow of an oligarchical monopoly, which most powerfully influenced the governing interests, was not one that could be easily produced in debate, but the opponents of the Catholic franchise

contended with the same arguments as those we have seen in the letters of Westmorland, that in a country where the great majority of the people are Catholics, the enfranchisement of the Catholics would necessarily lead in time to the destruction of the whole system of Protestant ascendency in Church and State, perhaps to a disturbance of landed property as it existed since the Revolution, most probably either to a legislative union with Great Britain or to a total separation from her. It was idle, it was said, to suppose that a Protestant superstructure could be permanently maintained on a Catholic basis. If the franchise was conceded, it must sooner or later be conceded on the same terms as to Protestants, and this would immediately make it in the counties completely democratic. In England land was usually let on short leases, and the number of county electors was supposed to be hardly more than one hundred thousand. In Ireland almost all lands were let on leases for lives, so that almost every peasant has a freehold tenure, and, if not disqualified by religion, a right to vote.[1] The introduction into the Constitution of a multitude of most ignorant forty-shilling freeholders would at once change all the conditions of Irish political life, would enormously increase the corruption and lower the intelligence of the constituencies, and would also greatly endanger the stability of property. The Protestants are superior in property, the Catholics are superior in numbers, and the Catholics will, therefore, find it their immediate interest to promote such a reform in Parliament as would give the influence to numbers and take it from property.

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 213. The discussion on extending the franchise to the Catholics, extended over the sessions of 1792 and 1793. Some of the arguments I have quoted were used in the latter session.

In general, however, the opponents of Catholic enfranchisement took a lower tone, and in speeches that were singularly free from the passion, violence, and panic which the Lord Lieutenant represented as so general, they resisted the measure merely on grounds of temporary expediency.[1] The Protestant constituencies had not been sufficiently consulted. The Catholic Committee consisted of men who had little weight or position in the country. Time should be given for the recent measures of concession to produce their mature and natural fruits, and a fuller system of united education should be established before Catholics were entrusted with political power. Ponsonby, who on the question of Catholic suffrage at this time separated himself from Grattan, dwelt strongly on this point, and with Grattan he urged that the united education, which was already carried on by connivance in Trinity College, should be legalised and encouraged, and that some of the professorships as well as the degrees should be thrown open to Catholics. It was noticed that the junior fellows were in general favourable, and the senior fellows opposed, to the encouragement of united education in the University.[2] On the whole Browne, who was one of the representatives of the University,

[1] This fact surprised Westmorland, but did not alter his opinion of the real sentiments of the House. He wrote confidentially to Pitt (Feb. 24, 1792): 'I was much surprised that several in their speeches thought the time might come when the franchise might be granted. With exception to Grattan, Egan and Curran, Hutchinson, and some few, perhaps a dozen, who are either Catholics lately conformed or connected with them, there is not one but would postpone that *ad Græcas Calendas*, for no letter I have written has sufficiently described the obstinacy, bigotry, and jealousy of almost every man upon that subject, and that we should have gone so far without quarrelling with our friends is an instance of luck, and, I hope, management, to me quite miraculous.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 150, 156, 220, 243; Hobart to Dundas, Feb. 20, 1792.

thought university opinion in favour of this concession, but argued that time should be given to gather its decisions. A motion in favour of granting degrees to Catholics in Trinity College was, however, brought forward by Knox, but for the present withdrawn.

In the course of the discussion of the Catholic question, the words Legislative Union were more than once pronounced. There were rumours that if the Catholic suffrage was granted, the Protestants in alarm would endeavour to obtain one. Burke mentions the persistence of the report, and while pronouncing his own opinion that a Legislative Union would not be for the mutual advantage of the two kingdoms, he thought that Pitt himself would have no desire to see a large body of Irish members introduced into Westminster.[1] Grattan spoke of the possibility of a legislative union being effected by giving the Catholics the prospect of enfranchisement, and at the same time acting on the fears of the Protestants. He regarded such a measure with the most unqualified hostility, and maintained that it would be fraught with the worst consequences not only to Ireland, but to the Empire. 'It would be fatal to England, beginning with a false compromise which they might call a union to end in eternal separation, through the progress of two civil wars.'[2] Curran spoke of a possible union with equal apprehension, predicting that it would mean the emigration of every man of consequence from Ireland, a participation of British taxes without British trade, and the extinction of the Irish name as a people.[3]

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[1] See Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 65; Letter to Langrishe; *Works*, vi. 364, 365. See, too, a memorial drawn up by Richard Burke, Nov. 4, 1792.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 168. There is a remarkable passage in Grattan's great speech against the commercial propositions in 1785, showing that he already dreaded such a measure. *Speeches*, i. 240.

[3] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 177, 178.

It is a curious subject of inquiry whether the idea of a legislative union had at this time taken any hold of the mind of Pitt, and this inquiry I am fortunately able to answer. Replying to a question in a despatch of Westmorland, which has been already quoted, he wrote: 'The idea of the present fermentation gradually bringing both parties to think of an union with this country has long been in my mind. I hardly dare flatter myself with the hope of its taking place, but I believe it, though itself not easy to be accomplished, to be the only solution for other and greater difficulties. The admission of Catholics to a share of suffrage could not then be dangerous. The Protestant interest in point of power, property, and Church Establishment would be secure, because the decided majority of the supreme Legislature would necessarily be Protestant, and the great ground of argument on the part of the Catholics would be done away; as compared with the rest of the Empire they would become a minority. You will judge when and to whom this idea can be confided. It must certainly require great delicacy and management, but I am heartily glad that it is at least in your thoughts.'[1]

In spite of the fears and predictions of the Lord Lieutenant, Langrishe's Bill passed through Parliament with scarcely any opposition,[2] and although the Catholic petition for the franchise was rejected by 208 to 23, no pledge against the future extension was given by or required from the Government. Westmorland took great credit to himself, and his letters seem to me to show that he had entirely misread the situation of the country. He assumed that a few great borough owners and officials faithfully and adequately represented the

[1] Pitt to Westmorland, Nov. 18, 1792 (*Westmorland Papers*).
[2] See Plowden, ii. 362–364.

Protestant sentiment, and he believed that the Catholic question had been settled, if not permanently, at least for a number of years. 'I flatter myself,' he wrote, 'this question will be laid at rest for some time, at least until you move the Catholic subject again in England, which I trust you will not do without some consultation.'[1] The position of the Government appeared to him exceedingly strong. The Protestants were satisfied because they believed that the ministers were determined to uphold the Protestant interest. The Catholics were satisfied, for 'they very well know to Government only are they indebted for the last concessions; the respectable part are extremely grateful.'[2] 'Everything here is most perfectly quiet, and from what I hear, I hope the Catholic Committee, if they are not dissolved, will be quite forgotten.'[3] This body was so far from having extorted the recent concessions, that nothing would have been granted had not a leading portion of the Catholics seceded from it. The Dissenters appeared to the Lord Lieutenant 'unquestionably very hostile to the Catholics,' and, except about Belfast and Newry, he had found no trace of disaffection among them.[4] Napper Tandy had been 'completely ruined in the city' by his 'Catholic declarations.' The parliamentary Opposition being 'suspected of Catholicism' was equally discredited, and there was every reason 'to count upon securing the peace and quiet of the country and having a strong Government.' 'The sense of the ruling part of the country,' he continued, 'both in and out of Parliament, is against giving power or franchise to the Catholics; till that opinion changes, any attempt of the Government (if

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Feb. 24, 1792. See, too, March 3.
[2] Westmorland to Dundas, April 4, 1792.
[3] Westmorland to Pitt, Mar. 3.
[4] Westmorland to Dundas, April 4, 1792.

the object was desirable, which I doubt *totis manibus*) would be mischievous and fruitless; whenever the temper changes, Government must be attentive to observe that change in time to take advantage of it, and get the credit of whatever may be done for the Catholics; that hour is very distant, and the more so from the late discussion.'[1]

The Catholic question, though the most important, was by no means the only subject which occupied the Irish Parliament in 1792. Much time was expended on the proceedings of Napper Tandy, who, resenting some remarks made by Toler the Solicitor-General, in Parliament, sent that official a challenge, and who when summoned to answer before the House for his contempt, evaded detection and only gave himself up on the day of prorogation, when the power of the House to punish him was at an end. The financial prosperity of the country was made a subject of much remark and congratulation. Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was able to announce in February, that there was a considerable surplus, and that the revenue of the half-year exceeded that of the last corresponding half-year by 50,000*l*.[2] Grattan argued that the state of the finances was so favourable that it would now be possible to relieve the poorest class of cottagers from the payment of hearth money. The Chancellor of the Exchequer fully admitted the prosperity, and was not unfavourable to the proposal, but he thought it advisable to wait till the unfunded debt accrued in former years was paid off.[3] Another and less pleasing subject which occupied the House during two or three sessions, was the great increase within the last seven years in the consumption of spirits, and the policy was strongly

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Feb. 24, April 4, 1792.

[2] Hobart to Dundas, Feb. 9, 1792.

[3] Hobart to Barnard, March 10, 1792.

urged of imposing new restrictions on the distilleries and giving additional encouragement to the breweries. In England the right of selling spirits was restricted to inns and taverns, but in Ireland ordinary shops were licensed, and Grattan asserted that nearly every seventh house throughout the country was a whisky shop.[1]

It was in the course of a committee on the spirit regulations in 1792, that the discussion was interrupted by confused voices on the roof, and the alarm was soon spread that the House was in flames. Every effort to arrest the conflagration proved vain, and in two hours the noble octagon, wainscoted with Irish oak, which had very recently excited the enthusiastic admiration of Wesley, was wholly destroyed. The fire did not extend to the other portions of the building, and the journals of the House were saved, but the picture of the conversion of the King of Cashel, which was the first great work of James Barry, perished in the flames. There were some rumours that the fire was due to a Popish plot, but they never appear to have acquired much consistency, and they were completely set at rest by an inquiry which showed it to have been purely accidental. The business of the House proceeded without interruption in another room, which had been fitted up for the reception of the parliamentary records.

An interesting debate was raised in February, by a motion of George Ponsonby for leave 'to bring in a Bill to repeal every law which prohibits a trade from Ireland to the countries lying eastward of the Cape of Good Hope.' The charter of the East India Company was on the eve of expiring, and the occasion appeared favourable for pointing out a disadvantage under which Ireland laboured. By an Irish Revenue Act this Company had been granted a monopoly of the supply

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xi. 68, 84.

of tea to Ireland, and all goods imported by the Company had to be first carried to London. It was said that Ireland expended annually nearly 400,000*l.* in purchasing East Indian goods at a price which was thus artificially enhanced; that the direct trade with China from which Ireland was excluded had become lucrative and important, and that it was partly on account of this restriction that in spite of the marked prosperity of the last few years the whole shipping of Ireland was still, less than a third of that of Liverpool alone. It was urged upon the other hand that the China trade was one in which Ireland was peculiarly unfit to engage, on account of its great distance, and of the fact that the Chinese received only silver in exchange for their tea. An export of silver could not be carried on from Ireland without great injury to the country, and Adam Smith had said that it was good policy for a nation with but small capital, for a time to purchase East Indian goods from other European nations even at a higher price, rather than by engaging in a direct trade with a distant country to divert a large portion of its capital from employments that are essential to its internal development. The existing system, it was contended, was a peculiarly good one, for it did not injure Ireland, while it was an undoubted benefit to England. It was a part of the price which Ireland paid to England for the preference that was accorded to her corn, for the monopoly that was accorded to her linen, for the protection of the Irish coast by the English fleet. The House acted in accordance with these latter arguments, and the motion of Ponsonby was rejected by 156 to 70.

A curious and very flagrant instance of Government corruption was this year brought by Browne under the notice of the House of Commons. The office of Weighmaster for the city of Cork, whose duty it was to weigh

butter, hides, and tallow, had been formerly in the gift of the corporation of that city, but had lately been appropriated by the Government, which had divided the office into three parts, and had given all of them to members of Parliament. The incident acquired an unexpected importance when Ponsonby made it the text of a speech reviewing the whole condition of the Irish Parliament, and raising once more within the House that question of parliamentary reform which was rapidly becoming the most pressing and the most important in the eyes of the public. Even before the appointment of the three weighmasters, the country was reminded, there were no less than 110 members of the House of Commons enjoying places and pensions, and while the public revenue of Ireland amounted to 1,600,000*l.* a year, very near one-eighth part of this sum was divided among members of Parliament. Place Bills, Pension Bills, and Responsibility Bills, tending to assimilate the Constitution to that of England, were steadily resisted. Almost every piece of lucrative patronage in the country was bestowed on members of Parliament or on their relations. Peerages were created with a lavishness unknown in England, and they were created mainly with the object of purchasing seats in the House of Commons. The religious denomination which comprised at least three-fourths of the people was absolutely unrepresented. Not more than eighty-two seats out of the three hundred in the House of Commons were returned by counties or considerable towns. Two-thirds of the representatives in that House were returned by less than one hundred persons. The men who had been most opposed to the Constitution of 1782 were the men who were employed to administer it, and they did so almost avowedly with the purpose of keeping Parliament in complete and habitual subservience to the English Ministers. This

was the condition of the Irish Legislature at a time when revolutionary ideas were surging fiercely in the North, and producing a disposition to judge all political institutions by the highest ideal standards.[1]

The form of government, indeed, which had for a long time existed in Ireland only bore a faint and distant resemblance to a representative system. Between 1585 and 1692 there had been intervals amounting altogether to nearly eighty-five years during which no Irish Parliament sat.[2] During nearly two-thirds of the eighteenth century the members of the House of Commons held their seats for the entire reign. The House of Lords was so constituted that it did not possess even a semblance of independence. At one time the bishops, who were appointed directly by the Crown, formed a majority of its active members. At other times the constant stream of ministerial partisans that was poured into it had made all real opposition an impossibility. It was chiefly important in Irish parliamentary history as an assembly of borough owners, and its moral authority was so low, that the restitution of its right of final judicature in 1782 was regarded by some good judges as a most dubious benefit. The anomalies of the borough system were not, as in England, chiefly the result of decay or time, but of innumerable creations under the Stuarts, made for the express purpose of rendering the Legislature completely subservient to the Crown. The same system in a different form had since then been steadily pursued whenever any symptoms of independence appeared. It had been the admission or rather the boast of the man who was now Lord Chancellor of Ireland, that in the contest under Lord Townshend, half a million of money had been expended in purchasing a majority. The declara-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 272, 277, 278, 280; xiii. 7, 159–163.
[2] Ibid. xiv. 84.

tion of 1782 made the Irish Parliament in theory independent, but it was the first object of the ministers to regain in influence everything which had been lost in prerogative, and it seemed idle to expect that a Reform Bill could be carried through the two Houses without their concurrence. Flood, as the representative and inspirer of the Volunteer Convention of 1783, had endeavoured by the display of military force to overawe the Government and the Parliament, and through fear of a rebellion to force through, a measure of reform. It was a step, dangerous, unconstitutional, and exceedingly likely to produce a civil war, but it might have been successful. It failed mainly because Grattan and the more moderate reformers refused to support it. The volunteers were induced to dissolve their convention, to lay aside their arms, and to trust to the Government to carry out a measure which was plainly demanded by public opinion, and necessary if the Constitution of 1782 was to become a reality. The result of their forbearance was that the system of corruption was steadily aggravated, and the influence of the Government was steadily exerted in opposition to reform. On the Regency question, it is true, Parliament broke away from ministerial control, but no one seriously believed that it would have done so had it not been supposed that the King was hopelessly incapacitated, and that there was likely to be in consequence a permanent transfer of patronage and power. And no sooner had the Government triumphed than they resolved to render the Parliament even more corrupt and subservient than before, and no less than fourteen parliamentary places were created in a single year. Under the forms of constitutional Government the spirit was thus almost wholly lost, and the property, the intelligence, the opinions of the country had not much more than a casual or precarious influence over legislation.

Many of these facts have been already stated in the present work, but it may not be useless to bring them once more in a connected form before the reader. In speech after speech, and session after session, they were pressed upon the Irish public, with all the force of great eloquence, and with every variety of illustration. 'The British House of Commons,' said Conolly, 'consists of 558 members, only 67 of whom are placemen, and no pensioners can sit in it. The Irish House of Commons consists of 300 members, 110 of whom are placemen or pensioners. They have adopted the whole power of the Privy Council before the repeal of Poyning's law, and appear determined to let no law pass which is not agreeable to the English Minister.' 'There are about 140 men,' said O'Neil, 'who vote with Administration on every great question. Of these men 110 have places or pensions.' Grattan described the system of Irish Government in 1792 as 'a rank and vile and simple and absolute Government, rendered so by means that make every part of it vicious and abominable; practically and essentially the opposite of the British Constitution.' 'By this trade of Parliament,' he said, 'the King is absolute. His will is signified by both Houses of Parliament, who are now as much an instrument in his hand as a bayonet in the hands of a regiment. Suppose General Washington to ring his bell and order his servants out of livery, to take their seats in Congress—you can apply the instance.' He quoted, with great emphasis, the opinion of Locke, that an attempt of the executive power to corrupt the legislative is a breach of trust, which, if carried into system, is one of the causes of a dissolution of Government, and a sure precursor of great revolutions in the State. 'Such revolutions,' Locke had said, 'happen not upon every misadministration in public affairs. Great mistakes on the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws,

and all the slips of human frailty will be borne without mutiny or murmur,' but when a long train of abuses and artifices all tending one way makes the design visible to the people, revolutions will not long be avoided.

Not a single fact in this crushing indictment could be seriously disputed. Much was, however, said of the danger of discrediting existing institutions, and much of the necessity of judging all institutions by their fruits. It was admitted that the Irish parliamentary system was rather a system of nomination than of representation. It was admitted, or, at least, not denied, that little more than a fifth part of the House of Commons was really under popular control, and that an appeal to the people by dissolution was little more than a farce; but it was asserted by the ministers, and fully acknowledged by the Opposition, that the country had for some years been steadily and rapidly improving, that many popular and beneficial laws had been enacted, and that some of them were of a kind which would hardly have been expected from a selfish oligarchy. The Irish laws against corruption at elections were very severe.[1] The improved method of trying disputed elections, which was the most valuable of the reforms of Grenville, was almost immediately enacted in Ireland.[2] The Irish Parliament readily followed the example of the English one in divesting its members of nearly all their invidious privileges.[3] 'Since 1779,' said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'the Parliament of Ireland has done more for the benefit of the kingdom than all the antecedent Parliaments from the days of Henry VII.,' and 'in this space the country has advanced to a degree of prosperity unhoped for even by the most sanguine.'[4] 'Under the

[1] 3 Geo. III. c. 13; 15 & 16 Geo. III. c. 16.
[2] 11 Geo. III. c. 12.
[3] 11 & 12 Geo. III. c. 12.
[4] *Parl. Deb.* xii. 20. See, too, on the great admitted prosperity of the country, pp. 22, 39, 90, 143, 280.

present state of representation,' said the same speaker on another occasion, 'the prosperity of the country has increased as much as it could under any other representation whatsoever, and as to liberty, the English Acts, which were adopted at and since 1782, show that the Irish Parliament was as well inclined to the people in that respect as any Parliament could be, in whatsoever manner it might be chosen.' In how many countries in Europe, it was asked, was civil and personal liberty as fully guaranteed by law as in Ireland? Since the accession of George III. Ireland had obtained the limitation of her Parliament by the Octennial Act, a free trade, the full participation of commercial intercourse with the British colonies in the West Indies and America, security of personal liberty by the Habeas Corpus Act, the benefit of all English treaties, the independence of the Legislature, the independence of the judges, the restoration of the final judicature. The Test Act had been repealed; the validity of Dissenters' marriages had been fully established; by far the greater part of the penal laws against the Catholics had been abolished, and a crowd of useful laws had been made for developing the resources and improving the condition of the people. A Legislature which could point to such a catalogue of measures enacted within thirty-two years could not be wholly contemptible, and with all its anomalies of representation the Irish House of Commons undoubtedly included a very large proportion of the best ability and knowledge in the community.

There was a time when such a defence would have been as readily acquiesced in by the country as by Parliament. But the French Revolution had raised up a new spirit, and made the government of Ireland, which had long been singularly easy, both difficult and dangerous. The nation had awakened to political life; a fever of agitation and speculation was abroad; and it

was already evident to sagacious men that unless speedy measures were taken to reform the abuses of the Irish Parliament, that Parliament would soon lose all power of guiding or controlling the nation.

The combination of the Catholic question with the question of parliamentary reform, while it greatly increased the weight of each, had introduced some new and important divisions into Irish politics. Charlemont and Flood, as we have already seen, had always contended that the exclusion of the Catholics from all political power was essential to the security of Ireland, and they believed that it could be best maintained by carrying out the policy of parliamentary reform. They desired to sweep away the nomination boroughs and to establish the Protestant ascendency upon the basis of a free Parliament, and of an electoral body which, though purely Protestant, would comprise the great preponderance of Irish property, intelligence, and energy. To such politicians recent events were very displeasing, and it is remarkable that Sir Edward Newenham, who had been one of the warmest supporters of Flood, and one of the most ardent reformers of 1783, was now a conspicuous opponent of the enfranchisement of the Catholics and apparently a very lukewarm reformer.

Flood had himself just died, but Charlemont, though his influence had greatly dwindled, was still the nominal head of the volunteers, and his letters show clearly the alarm and disgust with which he perceived the present tendencies of Irish politics. To his intimate friend, Halliday, who was a conspicuous reformer and also a conspicuous advocate of the Catholics at Belfast, he wrote on the subject with perfect frankness. 'The Belfast sentiment,' he said, 'is, as you inform me, that a complete reform is necessary, that without it the excellent regulations proposed by the Whig Club would be of little avail, and that without Catholic assistance

such reform may be despaired of. I have already mentioned to you,' he continued, 'though I fear without much avail, the danger which must always attend the calling in to our assistance auxiliaries more numerous than ourselves; but how are those dangers increased when an inveterate feud, excited and embittered by reciprocal injuries, has long had possession of the newly confederated parties whose reconcilement is now, after ages of animosity, suddenly and unaccountably produced by a recent and unnatural alliance. Complete your plans, and Ireland must become a Catholic country, but whether our masters will be as we are, may be matter of doubt, especially as toleration is certainly not the ruling principle of their religion, and as interest may possibly connect itself with principle to produce a contrary effect. There is no arguing from analogy between Ireland and any other country upon the globe, not only on account of the disparity of numbers, but also on account of those never-to-be-forgotten claims, which the slightest insight into human nature is sufficient to convince us will one day or other be made by those who have power to support them. . . . The bare idea that such claims may be made will at once put a stop to all money intercourse with England, and indeed with every other country, a circumstance which must, I think, be fatal to commerce. Who would accept of a mortgage on an estate held under a title disputed by those who are possessed of all power? And here I cannot avoid declaring an opinion on which my fears are in a great measure grounded, that should the plan now in agitation take place, it will necessarily lead to one of two, by me detested, consequences, either to separation or to union.'

Further on he recurs to the same idea in terms which are very remarkable. The prediction that the Government were about to bid high for the support of the

Catholics, seems to him exceedingly improbable. 'Indeed it is hardly possible that they should comply with demands so very extraordinary, and in which the interests of both countries are so deeply involved, unless it should be with the sinister view of finally compelling the Protestants of Ireland to call for a union, an object they have undoubtedly much at heart, and which they may reasonably think in a short course of time attainable by these means, though certainly by none other.' [1]

The views of Charlemont, however, were only held by a small minority of reformers. The great majority, both of those who with Grattan wished political power to rest chiefly in the hands of the possessors of landed property, and of those who, like the United Irishmen, would have established a purely democratic constitution, were now the advocates of the Catholics. They maintained that no reform could be adequate, which left the great majority of the people incapacitated on account of their religion; that no reform was probable, or perhaps possible, unless the Catholics united with the Protestants in demanding it. The English Government, on the other hand, were strongly opposed to any measure of parliamentary reform which might destroy or impair their absolute control over the Irish Legislature, and to maintain this authority unbroken was now the main object of their Irish policy. They had, however, no hostility to the Catholics, and were quite willing to give them votes in the counties, if by such a measure they could dissolve an alliance which was exceedingly dangerous to English ascendency, and prevent the spread of revolution and disloyalty. But the Irish Government was fully resolved, if possible, to perpetuate without change the whole existing system of monopoly and abuses.

[1] Charlemont to Halliday, Dec. 13, 1791. *Charlemont Papers.*

They were determined to resist all forms of parliamentary reform, all reduction of the patronage of the Crown, all attempts to give the Catholics a share of political power. Provided the usual bargains of peerages and pensions were duly made, they still believed that such a policy could be maintained, and when Parliament was prorogued on April 18, 1792, the country appeared to Westmorland essentially quiet, and the Protestant ascendency completely secure. A peerage must be granted to the wife of Sir Henry Cavendish, who, on the promise of a recommendation, had, together with three members who were dependent on him, abandoned the Ponsonby connection in 1791. Another must be given to Mr. Harman, with a remainder to Sir L. Parsons, and in this way a very formidable debater might be muzzled or conciliated. Lord Shannon, who was now separated from the Government, though he was 'a very lukewarm patriot' and very hostile to the Catholics, must be attached, and by these means all serious difficulties would be removed.[1]

The Lord Lieutenant, however, soon learnt that he had miscalculated the energy of the movement. His letters during the remainder of the year are extremely curious, but they must be read with the same reservations as the letters from which I have already quoted. They were written by a strong opponent of the policy of Catholic enfranchisement, by a governor who was surrounded by, and derived his chief information from, men who were at the head of the anti-Catholic party, and who desired above all things to obtain a decisive English declaration in its favour.

The proposed Catholic convention he thought especially serious. It was intended, among other objects, to coerce their own gentry and clergy, 'as their clergy,

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, April 4, 1792.

and the Pope himself, are very much intimidated by the agitations of these factious democrats.' The design, he said, was to elect a National Assembly, and such an assembly would be very alarming on religious, but still more on political, grounds. Is it to be supposed that the Catholic Committee, when reinforced by delegates from the whole country, 'would ever give way to so aristocratic a Parliament as the present Irish House of Commons? Every acquisition made through their application, or rather intimidation, would increase their power and influence with their electors, and would eventually produce a total reform of the present Parliament, and how England is to maintain its management of an Irish National Assembly is beyond my ability to conjecture.' It was 'a deep-laid scheme, not only against the religious establishment . . . but against the political frame of the Irish Government, which England has, with very little variation and exception, managed to her own purpose.'[1]

Westmorland painted in the strongest colours the Protestant ferment which was shown during the summer by the resolutions of the grand juries and of the county meetings, but he did not inform the Government of the great part which men connected with his Administration took in producing it, nor does he appear to have adequately described the amount of public support which the Catholic Committee found. The general condemnation of the sixty-eight seceders by their co-religionists, proved that while the old leaders of the Catholics were still exceedingly conservative, they had lost their power of guiding and restraining. It had been the policy of the penal laws to reduce as much as possible the numbers and influence of the Catholic landlords, and the unexpected but very natural consequence was, that the

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, June 7, 1792.

leadership of the Catholic body was passing into other and much less trustworthy hands. 'The powerful Catholics,' wrote Westmorland, 'however they may wish, as all men do, to get rid of disabilities, would be very sorry to do anything offensive to Government; . . . if they could get rid of violent democrats that manage their concerns, they would be very desirous to be quiet.'[1]

There were, however, no means of preventing the convention. The legal opinions in its favour published by the Committee were unanswered, and Westmorland was obliged reluctantly to confess that, if it confined itself to petitioning, he knew no existing law by which it could be suppressed. Grand juries and public meetings might protest, but they could do little more, and the moral effect of their protests was destroyed by the attitude of the Belfast Dissenters, and by the great Catholic meetings which now became common. In Dublin several thousand Catholics were addressed by Keogh, McNevin, and others, and a counter-manifesto was drawn up by Emmet in reply to the manifesto of the Corporation.[2] The opposition of the bishops to the meeting of the convention was at first very decided, but the Catholic Committee at last succeeded in obtaining the co-operation of some of them and the neutrality of the rest.[3] In October twenty-two counties, and most of the cities, had already elected delegates according to the prescribed form, and the other counties in a more irregular way, and instructed them to maintain a guarded language, but to petition for 'the elective franchise and trial by jury.'[4] 'The committee,' wrote Westmorland, 'are attempting, and have to a certain degree gained, a power over the people . . . and if the convention should meet, will probably have such influence and authority as

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 16, 1792.

[2] Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 67.

[3] Ibid. i. 86, 87.

[4] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

will be quite incompatible with the existence of any other Government.'[1]

'The general Catholic Committee,' he wrote a month later, 'have already exercised most of the functions of a Government. They have levied contributions; they have issued orders for the preservation of the peace —a circumstance perhaps more dangerous than if they could direct a breach of it—they maintain the cause of individuals accused of public crimes; their mandates are considered by the lower classes as laws; their correspondences and communications with different parts of the kingdom are rapid, and carried on, not by the post, but by secret channels and agents. If their general Committee have acquired this degree of power, what may not be apprehended from the power of the convention?' Among the lower classes vague, wild hopes were rapidly spreading. They have been told that the elective franchise will put an end to rents and tithes and taxes, and there was an evident change in their demeanour towards Protestants. There were alarming rumours of the purchase of arms, but, except in one or two counties, Westmorland did not believe them to be founded, and a thousand wild stories of conspiracies and intended massacres were floating through the country. Imprudent words, such as, 'We have been down long enough, It will be our turn next,' 'We shall not pay tithes after Christmas,' have been repeated and re-echoed through every part of the kingdom. At the same time the Lord Lieutenant adds that, though the lower orders of Catholics were often riotous, disorderly, and impatient of regular law, he had not heard of any symptoms of disaffection to their landlords.[2]

The evil, he thought, came chiefly from England,

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18; Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

and it was in the power of England to arrest it. 'The present agitation and impertinence of the Catholic body is a general impression . . . that England wished the Catholics to have further indulgence, was indifferent who was uppermost in Ireland, and would not take any part in any dispute that might arise; and I am very much inclined to believe that if they could once understand that English Government was resolved to support the Protestant Parliament and Establishment, the serious part of this agitation would end.'[1] Before Richard Burke came over there was no violence amongst the Catholics, and even now a clear intimation of the English sentiments may quiet the country.[2] He had consulted with his confidential servants, and reports that 'hardly anyone thinks the state of the country requires the immediate calling of the Parliament. They seem agreed in resistance, and in the cry that if England would but speak out that she would support the Parliament, the alarming part of the agitation would be at an end.'[3] Fitzgibbon especially, said that Government 'should not yield anything at present,' that 'British Government should speak out plainly their determination' to that effect, that this declaration must be inserted in the next Speech from the Throne, and that no conciliatory language towards Catholics should be used. If this course were taken, the Chancellor and the other confidential servants agreed that there was nothing to be feared.[4]

The Irish Government did not believe that there was any serious danger of rebellion from Catholics, and they were for a long time completely sceptical about the

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[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, 1792.

[2] Hobart to Barnard; Westmorland to Pitt, Oct. 20, Nov. 3, 19, 1792.

[3] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 24, 1792.

[4] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18, 1792.

possibility of union between Catholics and Dissenters. 'The greater part of the country,' wrote Hobart in November, 'is perfectly quiet.' 'Mr. Keogh and a particular set of the Catholics openly profess their approbation of the levelling system, and exult in the success of the French arms. These men industriously proclaim a junction between the Catholics and the Presbyterians, a junction, however, which only exists between themselves individually and the Dublin and northern republicans, and undoubtedly does not include either the body of the Presbyterians or Catholics.'[1] 'Except a few troublesome spirits in Dublin, perhaps a majority at Belfast,' writes Westmorland, 'the Protestants universally consider the admission of Catholics to political power as dangerous to their property, and as the annihilation of their Establishment. . . . I do not think that levelling principles have yet spread to any dangerous extent.'[2] 'I am convinced the Catholics have made no preparation for insurrection, nor have it at present in contemplation, nor any material connection with the great body of Dissenters.'[3] 'There is certainly a dislike between Protestant and Papist every day increasing.'[4] 'It is very extraordinary, but I believe the two sects of Irish hate and fear each other as much as they did one hundred years ago.'[5] A revival of volunteering was much spoken of, and it caused the Lord Lieutenant much anxiety, but he at first believed that it was mainly a Protestant movement against the Catholics.[6] Belfast, he says, is republican, but so it has been ever since the American war, and the republicans 'are far from agreed respecting Catholic emancipation,'

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Nov. 15.
[2] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18, 1792.
[3] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 19, 1792.
[4] Ibid. Oct. 20, 1792.
[5] Westmorland to Dundas, Sept. 19.
[6] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 3, 1792.

and many of them are most bigoted Protestants.[1] In parts of the counties of Down, Armagh, and Louth, the riots between the Defenders and Peep-o'-Day Boys were constantly raging. 'The lower ranks there have that inveteracy, that they are almost in a state of open war.'[2]

From an English point of view the divisions and ferment in Ireland appeared not altogether an evil. It had always been a leading English object to induce the Irish Parliament to support as large an army as possible, and the present time seemed well fitted for carrying out this object. 'The augmentation of the army is a point that I believe, if the agitation continues, would meet with the universal approbation of the Protestants . . . and I am convinced they would be equally ready to incur any expense that may be rendered necessary.'[3] Another remark, which is certainly not less significant, occurs in a later letter: 'The Protestants frequently declare they will have a union rather than give the franchise to the Catholics; the Catholics that they will have a union rather than submit to their present state of degradation. It is worth turning in your mind how the violence of both parties might be turned on this occasion to the advantage of England.'[4]

On the whole, up to the close of November the situation, though anxious, did not appear to the Lord Lieutenant seriously alarming. 'If some pains are not taken to prevent it,' he wrote, 'there will be a very general spirit of volunteering with the Protestants . . . owing to the opinion I have so often told you, that the British Government means to desert them. Every intelligence that reaches me respecting the Catholics bears the most pacific appearance. . . . The mind of

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 3, 1792.
[2] Ibid. Nov. 24, 1792.
[3] Ibid. Oct. 20, 1792.
[4] Ibid. Nov. 24, 1792.

the people is certainly very much heated by political discussions, and therefore one cannot foretell what may occur out of fortuitous circumstances, but no one fact has yet reached me, that manifested any plan for insurrection from the Catholics. The regular formation of a government, and correspondence with one another, seems to be more alarming and more difficult to counteract.'[1] Reports were persistently sent from England to the effect that arms had been largely imported into Ireland, but these reports after very careful investigation appeared either greatly exaggerated or wholly false. The real disaffection was confined to a few, though there was agitation and alarm over a great area. There had been serious riots at Cork and Bandon on account of the high price of provisions, and for some days the neighbouring country was ravaged by the mob. 'The lovers of mischief have circulated stories that the troops were unwilling to act, but on every occasion they manifested the greatest alacrity.' 'I hope,' continues the Lord Lieutenant, 'the pretence of famine will not set the country people into a flame. The common consequence of political discussions is to make them dissatisfied with their situation, and to these discussions may probably be in some measure attributed the corn riots in Cork.'[2]

Westmorland now agreed that it would be good policy for the Protestants to hold out to the Catholics hopes of future indulgence, but that the Government should avoid distinctly pledging itself. He promised, as far as he dared, to suggest this at a meeting of the confidential supporters of the Government which was about to take place, 'but so rooted and universal is the sentiment, that admission of the Roman Catholics to political power must overturn the property as well as political importance of the Protestant possessors,' that he almost

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 24, 1792. [2] Ibid. Nov. 28.

despairs of success. 'The affairs of the Continent have strangely altered this question, but so far they appear to have only strengthened the Protestant determination to resist.'[1]

Although a century has passed since they were written, some of the following remarks appear to me to have much more than a simply historic interest. 'I think Great Britain still may easily manage the Protestants, and the Protestants the Catholics; but this to me is clear, that you cannot support your Government without the confidence of the Protestants; I don't mean as the Catholics would say, the parliamentary monopolists, but I mean the upper class of the country, and that by whatever means you lose that, your command over the country is at an end.'[2] 'It must always be in our recollection that the Protestants hold by Great Britain everything most dear to them, their religion, their pre-eminence, their property, their political power. And surely it is fortunate, whilst levelling doctrines are afloat, to have so large a portion of subjects, including the Parliament, the magistracy and almost all the landed property, attached to British connection and to the British Constitution, and pledged against innovation by their peculiar situation. In consequence of the Roman Catholic agitation and claims, if the hour is not come, it may not be far distant, when you must decide, I fear, whether you will incline to the Protestant or the Catholic, and if such a necessity should arise, it cannot be doubted for a moment that you must take part with the Protestants. The success of Roman Catholic objects must end shortly in the abolition of all religious distinctions, and in a union of those distinctions, which could only be acquiesced in by England upon a well-grounded persuasion that the connection of the Empire

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 24, 1792. [2] Ibid. Nov. 19.

would be more insured by it, and that Ireland would then be more easily managed by English Government than by preserving the Protestants in their present situation. If such a union were once formed, and if the Protestants, after being forced into submission to it, should contrary to their expectations find themselves secure of their possessions without British protection, is it not to be feared they might run into the present Statemaking mania of the world, and form a Government more to the taste and wishes of the people than their present aristocratical Constitution? . . . You must at least expect resentment from the Protestants, and gratitude from so loose a body as the Catholics could not much be relied on.' Even if the Government were to yield what was now demanded, they 'would not put an end to the grievance of monopoly, whilst 3,000,000 of people were only to have a small share in the election of 64 members, and 236 were to be returned by a few Protestants.' Nor should it be forgotten that the Catholics themselves were by no means unanimous. 'The Roman Catholic gentry of property, and the higher classes of their clergy, are averse to this violence and the levelling system connected with it, and however anxious for the points in question, they would wish to carry them by peaceable application, and without offence to Government; but the violent attacks and threats of the democratic leaders of the Catholics have forced the clergy into a co-operation with their plan, and the gentry into an acquiescence.'[1]

Since Pitt had intimated that a legislative union was in contemplation, the notion was evidently much in the mind of the Lord Lieutenant, and the following curious passage shows his wishes and calculations, and especially his strong sense that the measure was only

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 18, 1792.

possible if the political division between the two religions in Ireland continued. 'A union,' he writes, 'is certainly at present not looked to or talked of with disapprobation by the leading people; if the Protestants should get over their Catholic prejudices, adieu to that cure for this country; however, I do not think that very likely. I have never formed any scheme in my own mind or had any notion from you of the sort of proportion that might be feasible in legislative [*sic*] or internal or external taxes. Tell me loosely what you think; I may be quietly able to sound the ground a little. The great men dread very much the ruin of themselves and the Establishment in the present agitations, and would therefore not be impracticable. The Catholics would probably not be averse to what put them on the line with the Protestants and opened to them the State; but the city of Dublin would be outrageous, and that description of politician who can cabal and job here, but who would either not reach or be lost in the magnitude of the Court of London. Would you not find great difficulty on your side the water? The admission of the Irish members to the House of Commons must throw considerable weight to the Crown, a very fortunate thing, but would be much argued upon, besides the commercial difficulties we should have to encounter. The subject is full of difficulties, and the most requisite of all is not to let such an idea be suspected, for if it took a wrong turn one cannot tell what mischief it might produce. As it is generally considered here that this Catholic agitation is of English making, the Irish have imagined that English Government would not have raised such a flame but to serve their own purposes. . . . Such is the agitation and alarm at present that it is not possible to say what current the popular opinion may take. I should, I own, be very proud if I should be the manager in such a successful business. Waiting,

however, for accidents, and making the most of them, we must for the present get over our present crisis.'[1]

I cannot find any evidence that Pitt responded to these speculations. He was evidently anxious and disquieted, but also perplexed about the course which Irish politics were taking. He expressed much alarm at the prospect of the Catholic Convention, but did little more than throw out suggestions for the consideration of the Irish Government. Might it not be wise to prohibit the import of arms into Ireland; to disarm the Papists; to call Parliament together and propose to it an augmentation of the forces? 'Whatever opinions may have been entertained by any of us here, as to the propriety of endeavouring to keep the Catholics quiet by prospect of further and gradual concession, we have never entertained a doubt of the necessity of showing a firm determination to resist every attempt to carry their point by force or intimidation. There seems but too much reason to fear that such is their present design, and indeed the unexpected turn of affairs in France is but too likely to give encouragement to the lovers of disorder in every part of the world.' It is 'an object of the most serious importance not to let Protestant volunteering on any pretence gain ground. Whatever may be its object or effect in the present moment, it must in the end be destructive to the authority of regular government.' Pitt complains that he has not sufficient local knowledge to judge the question, but he approves of a suggestion of Westmorland that the creation of a militia might be the best way of checking the spirit of volunteering, and at the same time maintaining the peace of the country.[2]

Some doubts appear to have been again expressed

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[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 28, 1792.

[2] Pitt to Westmorland, Oct. 14, Nov. 18, 1792.

about the willingness of the English Parliament to vote men and money to support the Irish Protestants, if these were confronted by a rebellion because they refused to give votes to the Catholics. Hobart wrote that England had no right to hesitate for a moment: 'If the question now at issue was on the passing of a new law, it would undoubtedly be for the consideration of his Majesty's confidential servants whether to advise his Majesty to withhold or give his consent. But as the case now stands the Irish Parliament are on the defensive, and have an unquestionable right to call on his Majesty to assist them in supporting the Protestant Establishment.' The complete legislative independence of the Irish Parliament had been fully acknowledged in 1782 and 1783, and it was therefore entirely inadmissible that the question of suffrage in Ireland should be discussed in the English Parliament. On all the many occasions in which English policy had involved the Empire in war, the Irish Parliament had loyally assisted England, and if for the first time since the Revolution an armed struggle broke out in Ireland, England must recognise a corresponding obligation. 'The inseparable annexation of the crowns of Great Britain and Ireland so connects the two countries, that the enemies of the one must ever be considered the enemies of the other. In the late Spanish business, when his Majesty was likely to be involved in war, the Irish Parliament cheerfully came forward to support the common cause. No inquiry was made into the policy of the war, or into the interest Ireland might have in the object of dispute. Although it was well known it originated in a question of trade to a territory from the commerce of which Ireland was precluded by a British law, there was no abstract reasoning on the subject. The broad principle of supporting his Majesty against those whom he had thought fit to declare to be his enemies was admitted

and acted upon in Ireland. The difference upon the present question as it bears upon Great Britain appears to be whether those who enter into rebellion against his Majesty are less the enemies of the Empire, than those who dispute a territory on the north-west coast of America.' It is of course open to the English Ministers to ask their friends in Ireland to support their views, but Hobart, knowing the opinions of that class of Irish politicians, was convinced that it would be useless for them to do so. 'I can assure you that an attempt to carry the franchise for the Catholics under the present circumstances would be perfectly nugatory.'[1]

French affairs were now beginning to influence Irish politics as powerfully as American affairs had done ten years before. The passionate enthusiasm which the principles of the Revolution had produced among large classes, rose higher and higher when it became evident that almost all Europe was likely to be involved in the struggle. The insulting manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, the invasion of French territory and the capture of Verdun, were speedily followed by the check of the Prussians at Valmy, and by the ignominious retreat of the allied army across the Rhine. French soldiers entered Worms, Mentz, and Frankfort: Savoy and Nice were annexed. Royalty in France was abolished, and the triumphant Republic held out the promise of support and brotherhood to every suffering nationality in Europe. In November, the great victory of Jemmapes placed Austrian Flanders at its feet; and before the year had closed, the French power extended to the frontier of Holland. England was now rapidly arming, and it was becoming more and more evident that she would soon be drawn into the war.

The effects of these events in Ireland were soon

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Nov. 19, 1792.

felt. The new spirit of volunteering which the Lord Lieutenant had deplored, and which he still ascribed chiefly to the Protestant dread of the Catholics, continued to increase, and it was evident that it was assuming a republican form. In July, a great meeting of the volunteers and inhabitants of Belfast, numbering about six thousand, voted unanimously an address to the French nation congratulating them on the capture of the Bastille, and also an address in favour of the Catholic claims, and it was observed that some of the most popular Dissenting ministers of the district spoke strongly in their favour.[1] In Dublin a new military association was formed, modelled after the French National Guards and openly avowing republican principles. Napper Tandy, Hamilton, Oliver Bond, and Henry Jackson, appear to have been the chief organisers. They adopted as their emblem the harp without a crown, surmounted with the cap of liberty. It was intended to form three battalions, and it was reported that they were to bind themselves not to lay down their arms till they had obtained the privileges desired by the Catholics and a reform of Parliament, and that similar battalions were to be formed at Belfast and Derry.[2]

Hobart had written to England in September, requesting that all information that could be discovered about the relations of Ireland with France should be sent to him, 'for although,' he said, 'I am not at all apprehensive of real danger, it is perfectly certain that there are at present a number of persons industriously

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[1] Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 68, 69.

[2] Hobart to Nepean, Nov. 30; Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 5, 1792; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 35. The buttons on the buff and blue uniform of the Whig Club, bore the harp surmounted by the Crown. Grattan's *Life*, iv. 71.

employed in endeavouring to create confusion.'[1] He mentioned that he had discovered that Broughall, an active agitator in the Catholic Committee, was in correspondence with Condorcet, though he had not as yet found anything political in his letters.[2] It appears certain, however, that some political correspondence had for some time been going on between disaffected Irishmen and French agents. The mission of Bancroft in 1789 does not appear to have led to much result. In October 1790, before the agitations which have been described began, a long despatch, which was probably from his pen, was sent to the French Foreign Office. It opens with a full description of a dispute about the election of a Lord Mayor of Dublin, which had arisen between the Corporation and the Government, and which has now lost all interest, and the writer then proceeded to give a vivid, though probably not perfectly accurate, description of the state of the country. Religious hatred, he says, has gone down. Jacobitism is forgotten. Time has insensibly effaced the memory of old injuries. The oppressed majority of the nation have begun to breathe anew, and regard with gratitude a restoration of some of the rights of Nature. 'A few years more, and the Irish may form a nation, which they have not been for six hundred years.'

Irish parties, the writer continued, are now quite unlike the old ones. They no longer grow out of civil war, violence, and proscription, but have assumed much of the character of parties in England. Corrupt men who think themselves neglected, and a few genuine patriots oppose the Government. The mass of the people, sunk in poverty and ignorance, have no more political influence than in Poland. The middle class are very few. Commerce has so little weight that

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Sept. 7, 1792. [2] Ibid. Oct. 20.

there is not a single merchant in Parliament. The landlord class is the only one that is powerful.

From this position, says the writer, it is easy to forecast the reforms that may be expected. Everything that tends to increase the influence of the Legislature will be supported from all sides, but little or nothing will be done to improve the condition of the poor, to throw a larger portion of taxation on land, to purify the representative system, or to diminish the number of useless places. Ireland had lost her great opportunity when the Convention of 1783, 'a respectable and well-intentioned body, failed because it was not supported by some powerful men. Its failure has thrown a certain ridicule on Irish democracy, and it may be long before it is repaired.'[1]

In about two years, however, the aspect of Irish politics and the opinions of French observers had greatly changed. In December 1792, a French agent represented that under the guidance of six or seven daring conspirators an Irish revolution was rapidly preparing, and that France might find it a powerful auxiliary in the impending struggle.[2] From this time Irish affairs assume some prominence in the secret archives of France, and an agent named Coquebert, who was established as consul at Dublin, seems to have been in close connection with some of the leaders of the United Irishmen.[3]

Charlemont complained bitterly that the volunteers

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[1] See an unsigned memorial from Dublin, Oct. 27, 1790, 'On the Affairs of Ireland,' and also a letter of Luzerne, July 27, 1790, French Foreign Office.

[2] See an unsigned memorial from London, Dec. 1, 1792, and two letters from the minister at Paris, Dec. 9, 18, 1792, French Foreign Office.

[3] See a memorial written by him, Dec. 18, 1792. It appears from one of the supplemental volumes in the French Foreign Office (1773–1791) that Coquebert was in Dublin and occupied with Irish politics as early as Feb. 1791.

were no longer what they had been; that the 'silly and useless affectation' of French names and appellations and emblems which had grown up among them had 'brought shame upon the institution,' and that, though he was still their nominal general, they had not for some years past in a single instance either asked or taken his advice. 'No Egyptian hierophant,' he said, 'could have invented a hieroglyphic more aptly significant of a Republic than the taking the crown from the harp and replacing it by a cap of liberty.' It had been the custom of the volunteers since their foundation to parade annually round the statue of King William III. on November 4, the anniversary of their institution, but this ceremony they now refused to perform.[1] In the following month the United Irishmen issued an address to the volunteers, calling on them to resume their arms, and urging the necessity of a parliamentary reform; and some of the Dublin corps voted thanks to them for their address.[2] Rowan, Napper Tandy, Keogh, and Oliver Bond were the leading spirits in this new movement, and the United Irishmen, though chiefly directed by Protestants, now contained a considerable minority of Catholics among their members. 'The great danger,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'is from the North, where certainly the volunteering spirit, from the dislike to the Catholics, has gained ground, and if that dislike should be done away . . . as they have fallen into the guidance of the middling rank of people, their republican principles may lead to every possible mischief.' 'Some corps have already expressed their determination to force a reform of Parliament.'[3] French events occupied the foremost place in the newspapers; French victories

[1] Charlemont to Halliday, Feb. 26, 1793. *Charlemont Papers.*

[2] McNevin, p. 35.

[3] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 11, 1792.

were received by many with unconcealed delight, and there were some small attempts at illuminations and other demonstrations in the streets.

Grattan, like the other leaders of the old reform party in Parliament, was extremely anxious that the questions of reform and Catholic emancipation should be dissociated from disloyal and republican principles. He strongly censured the conduct of the new national guard in adopting republican emblems, declaring that though he wished the ministers of the Crown changed, the Crown itself was very essential to the prosperity of Ireland. He was decidedly in favour of the Catholic Convention, but his advice to the Catholics was beyond all things to avoid 'republican principles and French politics,' and he warned them that men connected with the Irish Government were representing them as in a state of rebellion probably in order to induce the English to assist in crushing them.[1] He refused to join the United Irishmen, but as the Whig Club had declined to commit itself to the two measures which he now deemed imperatively necessary, a new association called the 'Friends of the Constitution' was formed in December 1792, under the presidency of the Duke of Leinster. It was probably imitated from the society of 'The Friends of the People,' which had been established a few months earlier in England by Sheridan and Grey, and it was intended to promote in every way Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, while resisting all republican innovations.[2] Grattan saw clearly that the ties of influence that bound the Catholics to their gentry were severely strained, and he feared greatly that the Government policy would give a confirmed ascendency to new and dangerous influences, which might

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 73, 74. [2] Ibid. pp. 126, 127.

one day precipitate the Catholic body into a career of rebellion.

The danger was indeed obvious. On the one side the Catholics found the Irish Government surrounded and supported by the men who were the most vehement and the most powerful opponents of their enfranchisement. Fitzgibbon, the Beresfords, the Elys, the great body of the large borough owners who were the pillars of the oligarchical system in Ireland, contended that the Catholics should be absolutely excluded from all share of political power. They had steadily exerted their influence against them both in the Parliament, in the Privy Council, and in the country. Men connected with or trusted by the Government had originated or stimulated the recent movement of the grand juries and county meetings, which had done so much to revive the smouldering embers of religious animosity. Nor did it appear probable that their sentiments would change, for they believed, and justly believed, that the continued subjection of the Catholics was essential to the maintenance of their political monopoly. On the other hand a party supported by a great part of the Dissenters of the North were labouring in the first place to abolish that oligarchical monopoly, and to replace it by a democratic representation entirely irrespective of religious distinctions, and in the next place to abolish the system of tithes, which was the greatest practical grievance, both of the poorer Catholics and of the Presbyterians. And this party was now offering its alliance to the Catholics.

Some steps of approximation soon took place. Simon Butler, the chairman of the United Irishmen, drew up and published by the direction of the society a digest of the Popery laws in Ireland, which exercised a powerful influence on opinion by its clear statement of the number and magnitude of the disabilities under which, at least

by the letter of the law, the Catholics still laboured. The United Irishmen gladly admitted Catholics among their members, and they issued many addresses advocating complete emancipation. Keogh, who was the ablest of the new Catholic leaders, was a regular attendant at the meetings of the United Irishmen, and in the spring of 1792 Wolfe Tone, the founder of the United Irishmen, and one of the most active republicans in Ireland, became paid secretary of the Catholic Committee in the place of Richard Burke. He owed his appointment to the brilliant pamphlet which he had published in the previous September, and he has recorded the interesting fact that when that pamphlet was published he did not reckon a single Catholic among his acquaintances.[1]

On the Presbyterian side the tendency towards Catholic alliance was very marked. It was shown not only by the growing power of the United Irishmen and by many successive demonstrations at Belfast, but also by the significant fact that a large number of the most popular Presbyterian ministers were active members of the new party. At the same time it is no doubt true, that the primary object of the Presbyterians was not Catholic emancipation but parliamentary reform; that they had in general very little natural sympathy with Catholics; that their true and governing motive was the conviction that the existing system of oligarchical and English ascendency could only be destroyed by a cordial union of the whole Irish people. Though written with directly opposite aims and wishes, the confidential letters of Lord Westmorland agree curiously with the writings of Wolfe Tone and the other leading United Irishmen in their judgment of the situation. They both contended that a real union between the different re-

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 52.

ligious sects in Ireland, and the introduction of Catholics into political life, would inevitably lead to a reform of Parliament, which would destroy at once the oligarchical ascendency and the controlling influence of the English Executive over the Irish Parliament, and would induce Irish statesmen to regulate their policy mainly by the public opinion of their own country. It was the Belfast doctrine that the English Government desired to keep the people divided in order to govern them, and that to put an end to this division should be the first object of every Irish patriot.

That this was a predominating, or at least a rapidly growing, opinion among Irish reformers appears to me indubitable, though the letters of the Lord Lieutenant not unnaturally magnified the signs of dissension. There were, however, still a few reformers, who, like Charlemont, would have severed the question of reform from the Catholic question. There were occasions in which it was found necessary to exclude the Catholic question from resolutions, lest it should produce dissension, and among the lower orders both of the Presbyterians and Catholics in Ulster, old religious fanaticisms and animosities still blazed fiercely in the conflicts between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders. There was a curious contrast between the members of the Established Church and the Protestant Dissenters in their attitude towards Catholics. Among the former, as far as can be now ascertained, purely religious intolerance seems to have almost completely died away, and their opposition to the Catholic claims was chiefly an opposition of interest or monopoly. Among the Presbyterians a strong feeling of common interest was producing a Catholic alliance, but religious animosities, though greatly diminished, were not extinct, and it was not impossible to revive them.

All the best evidence we possess concurs in showing

that there was as yet no serious disaffection in the Catholic body outside a small circle of Dublin shopkeepers. The spirit which had induced the Catholics to select as their agent and representative the only son of the greatest living opponent of the French Revolution still survived, and although they now felt keenly the disabilities that maintained them in the position of a subject and an inferior caste, they had no wish to throw themselves into opposition to the Government. No class of men had been more steadily loyal, more essentially conservative in their sympathies, than the Catholic gentry, and if the fatal policy of the penal laws had not reduced them to insignificance, if they had continued to form a large and important part of the landed interest of Ireland at a time when landed property still retained its natural influence in the State, it is probable that the Government of Ireland would have proved little more difficult than that of any other Catholic country. The political importance of a large class of Catholic landed gentry would no doubt have been incompatible with the permanent maintenance for the exclusive benefit of a small fraction of the people of a religious establishment supported by tithes, but it would have supplied a safe guiding influence for the Catholic peasantry, and a great element of conservatism and stability in the country. But the articles in the penal code regulating the succession of land, forbidding Catholics to purchase land or to acquire those long and profitable leases which frequently developed into ownership, and offering to the eldest son of a Catholic landlord overwhelming inducements to conform, had immensely aggravated the unfortunate disposition of property which the confiscations had begun; and the recent secession had weakened, though it had not destroyed, the power of the few remaining Catholic gentry over their people. But like the Catholic prelates those gentry were still entirely on

the side of loyalty, and a large portion of the seceding body had again been reconciled to the Committee.[1]

The general influence of the priesthood appears to have been on the same side. Among its inferior members, it is true, there were grossly ignorant and disreputable characters, who were probably often connected with the Whiteboy outrages; and, as we shall see in the course of the narrative, there is some evidence that a new and dangerous spirit was beginning to ferment among them; but the priests had not yet become political leaders, and as a class they were still essentially conservative. This was the opinion repeatedly expressed by the Lord Lieutenant, and it was equally the opinion of Wolfe Tone, who believed that there was no probability of drawing them into his cause till they were educated at home. It could scarcely, indeed, be doubted how a priesthood educated in continental seminaries must have looked upon a Revolution which had burst like a great anti-christian religion upon the world, subverting the ancient order of belief and authority, plundering the clergy, destroying the altars, turning the greatest Catholic nation in Christendom into an implacable enemy of the Church. The peasantry, sunk in poverty and ignorance, had no political interests, and, although they neither loved, nor feared, nor respected the law, and could be easily combined against tithes, or pasture land, or the enclosure of commons, or for the rescue of prisoners, or in resistance to bailiffs or creditors, they had not as yet shown the smallest disposition to rebel against the political order under which they lived. Over a great part of Ireland the people were in a high degree turbulent, riotous, and anarchical; but anarchy is a different thing from disaffection, though it prepares the soil in which disaffection can most rapidly grow. As yet, however, the seed had not

[1] Plowden, ii. 387, 388.

been sown. On no other hypothesis can the perfect political quiet that prevailed in Catholic Ireland during the first ninety years of the century—in times when England was involved in great foreign or internal struggles, and in times when Ireland was almost denuded of troops—be reasonably explained. The time was soon to come when all this would change; but Catholic disaffection was still a rare and superficial thing, and even the violent party appear to have generally aimed only at legitimate and moderate reforms, though they were prepared to obtain them by revolutionary measures and alliances.

The election of Catholic delegates had greatly alarmed the Lord Lieutenant, but before the Convention met he wrote that wide differences had become apparent: 'Keogh, Byrne, and the Committee [being] for violent proceedings, the gentlemen and people returned from the country for moderate, which I dare say Messrs. Keogh and Byrne will be obliged to acquiesce in.'[1] 'Though they are unanimous in the pursuit of their object, great divisions prevail amongst them, the delegates from the country having apprehensions from the levelling principles of the Committee, but particularly Mr. Keogh.'[2] 'Be assured,' he wrote a few days later, 'there is no preparation for insurrection at present. The United Irishmen are not in force at present, but they are a very popular justification for the exertions of Government. It may perhaps be thought advisable to attempt a militia when we put down the volunteers. . . . Every account we get of Catholic deputies mentions the most pacific intentions, but certainly Mr. Keogh, the present leader of the Catholic Committee, is the author and manager of the new volunteer corps.'[3] 'We must be cautious not

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Nov. 28, 1792.
[2] Westmorland to Dundas, Nov. 29, 1792.
[3] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 1, 1792.

to give offence to the old volunteers, a very great majority of whom are certainly on the present occasion strong supporters of the Protestant Establishment. . . . I do not believe more than four hundred or five hundred in Dublin are concerned in this business [of the National Guard]. The Catholic shopkeepers in this, as in every other great town, have caught in a degree the French mania, but in equal proportion the Protestants are loyal.'[1]

The Catholic Convention met on December 3, and nearly at the same time a despatch arrived from England intimating clearly to the Irish Government that no military assistance could be expected. 'The comfortless communication which we last received,' wrote Hobart, 'without even a private friend to intimate confidentially upon what ground we were made so completely independent, has driven us to look at home for our safety, which if we can effect we may deem ourselves peculiarly fortunate.' Measures were accordingly taken to form a militia, which, the Chief Secretary said, was a matter of extreme difficulty owing to the general preference for volunteering. 'You have much more,' he added, 'at stake in Ireland than you are aware of. You are taught to believe that it is a mere question between Catholic and Protestant. I wish it was. . . . Be assured, however, that it is of much deeper concern to us all, and that it goes to the complete overturning of the Constitution.'[2]

All the information that was received of the proceedings of the Catholic Convention concurred in representing it as loyal and moderate, but it took one step which was naturally very offensive to Westmorland, and which clearly showed its sense of the hostility of the Castle.

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[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 4, 1792.

[2] Hobart to Nepean, Dec. 5, 1792.

It determined to petition the King directly, and not through the medium of the Irish Government. The petition was signed by Dr. Troy and Dr. Moylan on behalf of themselves and the Catholic prelates and clergy, and by the several delegates for the different districts they represented; and five delegates, including Keogh and Byrne, were selected to present it to the King. 'You now probably see,' wrote Westmorland when this step was announced, 'the consequence of having so long delayed the Garter, which would have prevented such a proceeding. The Catholics are persuaded that the English Government wish them better than the Irish; they have brought the point to issue. The similar belief has produced an alarm and consternation amongst the Protestants, the ill effect of which, if not done away, in its various consequences is beyond my expression or even calculation. . . . You must contrive to satisfy the Roman Catholic delegates that the English and Irish Government have the same sentiments, or you must be convinced of the impossibility of carrying on the Government. It is certainly our business to conciliate the Catholics as much as we can without losing the Protestants. . . . I am convinced the Catholics do not generally mean, nor are the knot of disaffected prepared for, mischief at present; and I am equally convinced that no concession will satisfy the present democratic spirits who have the management of the Roman Catholics, the present frame of the Government existing; but I by no means include the general body of the Catholics. The gentry and priesthood are much attached to monarchy, but these confounded factions of the towns have persuaded them that everything is to be carried by intimidation. I mean to try the experiment of the militia. If the Protestants, backed by the Government, come boldly forward, this levelling system will be of little importance. However, in the present troubled state of

the world, it is essential to be prepared in force.' He asks for more troops. 'Our conduct,' he says, 'for the next month is most critical. . . . However, it is unavoidable, and I am satisfied for the present there is no danger, whatever the levelling spirit and success of the French may hereafter produce.'[1]

He now acknowledged that Protestant opinion was by no means altogether hostile to the Catholic claims, though he believed that this disposition was the result of a mere transitory panic, and was evidently anxious that the English Government should not embark on a policy of conciliation. 'The success of the French, the probability of England being involved in war or insurrection, and being unable, and what is worse, the suspicion that she is unwilling, to assist Ireland, frightens the Protestants. The violence of the levellers and republicans has altered in some degree the opinions of many on the Catholic question, and they begin to feel and express in conversation the necessity of attaching the Catholics to the Constitution. I speak of the city only. I have no reason to think, and do not believe, this temper has spread to the country. If the question of elective franchise was to be tried in the temper of *this hour*, the Catholics, with the assistance of Government, would have many friends; but I cannot say the concession could be carried by any exertion, or that if it was forced it would not give such offence to the Protestants as would ruin the Government absolutely, and lay it entirely open to every popular democratic concession that could be started; in short, that every public man would quit the English attachment, which they would consider as untenable, and endeavour to acquire strength and favour in the cause of the Irish nation. . . . Whether the concession is or is not beneficial to England, need not be the

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 7, 1792.

question. I rather think not; should the Protestants be much divided on the point we cannot support it, but it is at best our business to let them understand that the concession, whatever it may be, is their own choice and not any compulsion or desertion of ours. I believe the conciliatory temper to be the panic of the hour, and that the anti-Catholic feeling upon the least stand being made will return. . . . The Chancellor, Speaker, Parnell, and others, seem to consider English Government ruined in the concession. I do not, therefore, recommend anything different from the tenor of my despatches at present. . . . If the temper of the country will bear conciliation you shall have timely notice, and if it is thought expedient to do anything for the Catholics, let me manage. I can tell what can and what cannot be done, and at least whatever is palatable should come from the staunch friends of Government. . . . On no account give any encouragement or expectation to Keogh or the deputies. If anything appears to be obtained by the influence of Keogh particularly, the whole Irish Catholics will follow him, and be assured he has views of the most alarming nature to the present Constitution. . . . You must at all events either by yourselves in England or through me express a firm determination to support the Constitution, and if I could relieve the Protestants from the unfortunate jealousy they have, the present panic would cease. . . . Don't run away with the notion of concession being easy or even practicable, but in whatever we do we must conciliate the Protestant mind to England, or his Majesty, at least his Government, will not long have power in Ireland. I really believe one word from England of support of the Constitution against whoever should attempt to disturb it, would have astonishing effect. . . . The present hour is not fit for concession if it can be avoided, but perhaps by cautious management the difficulties may be dimi-

nished if you wish it. We must avoid, till we see our way, positive pledging one way or another.'[1]

The leading members of the new National Guards invited all the volunteer companies in Dublin to meet on December 9, to celebrate the triumph of liberty in France. The Government, on the day immediately preceding the intended muster, issued a proclamation forbidding all seditious assemblies, and commanding the magistrates, if necessary, to suppress them by military force. It was drawn up in terms that were carefully chosen, so as not to be offensive to the old volunteers, and no attempt was made to disobey it. The disaffection, however, was daily increasing, and seditious newspapers, seditious broadsides, seditious ballads sung in the streets, seditious cries in the theatre, and attempts, though hitherto in vain, to seduce soldiers from their allegiance, all indicated the uneasiness that was abroad. 'If the levelling spirit,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'is not checked, the worst consequences may ensue. What we chiefly want is to undeceive the people respecting the indifference of England. . . . The reforming spirit has spread surprisingly within the last fortnight.' He urgently implores that fresh troops should be sent over.[2] The United Irishmen proposed to consolidate the union of sects by sending a deputation to the Catholic Convention, but that body, with remarkable prudence, declined to receive it.[3]

In Dublin, but the Lord Lieutenant thought only there, a belief had spread among men of property that England was 'indifferent about the fate of the establishment and property of Ireland,' and it had thrown them 'into a most miserable state of despondency, which has worked a spirit of conciliation to the Catholics, upon the principle of attaching them to the Constitution to save

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 9, 1792.
[2] Ibid. Dec. 10, 1792. [3] Ibid.

it from the levellers.' He adds, however, that it was panic, and not conviction; that the Chancellor, the Speaker, Beresford, and Parnell were unchanged in their sentiments, and that Catholic suffrage, if carried against the opinion of the privileged classes of the country, would, he feared, very probably ruin the English Government. 'All the politicians would, either from resentment or policy, look to popularity in Ireland, and . . . every unpleasant Irish question of trade, particularly the India one, and every popular scheme to fetter English Government, would be pressed in an irresistible manner.' The great Catholic body is not connected with the United Irishmen, but its leaders in Dublin are. Their conduct 'renders concession dangerous, for if given in the moment of intimidation, who can answer for the limit that may give content? . . . If the Protestants are alienated, the connection between the countries in my opinion is at an end. If the concession is found advisable, and we can manage the business in a manner not to alienate the Protestants, it will not be so dangerous, though it will certainly be hazardous, and at least every step of conciliating the two descriptions of people that inhabit Ireland diminishes the probability of that object to be wished, a union with England. Before the present panic, it was a good deal in the thoughts of people, as preferable to being overwhelmed by the Catholics, as Protestants termed concessions, or continuing slaves, in the Catholic phrase. That conversation, since the Protestants have been persuaded that England either could or would not help them, has subsided.' More troops, he again says, are necessary to the security of the country, but he still believes that 'a big word from England, of her determination to support the Protestant Establishment, would set everything quiet.'[1]

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 11, 1792.

'The most able and most attached to English Government,' he wrote two days later, 'will not hear of concession in the present state. The Chancellor professes himself indifferent on the question, except as a servant of English Government, to which he considers himself bound, and in his mind concession under the present circumstances is so fatal to the English connection, that every risk is to be run rather than yield. I asked him in very strong terms whether he was prepared for a rebellion in the North and South at the same instant. He said (in which I suspect he was right) that he did not apprehend there was much danger of either; that gentlemen were very bold on paper, but very shy of risking either their lives or their fortunes, but that, if it was to happen, England had better undertake a war in Ireland whilst the Protestants were her friends, than when she had no friends in the country, which would be the case after the repeal of the Popery Code; that it was ridiculous to suppose that England could manage Ireland by any influence of Government, if the public voice directed the Government, and that in a few years she must have recourse to a second management of the sword or conquest.'

Such an opinion from the ablest of the supporters of the Government had naturally great weight, but Westmorland professed himself ready to do what was possible to meet the wishes of the English Ministry. 'I cannot,' he says, 'consider the Catholics, in a political light, as a powerful body in the country, nor should I be much afraid of their political influence; but if they can establish an assembly or representative body of the people, and . . . procure [*sic*] the people to follow them, such a sect of innovators, if encouraged by success, will eventually overset an aristocratical Government. There is certainly great danger in provoking rebellion, but there is much greater chance of provoking

it if the Government should attempt anything for the Catholics and should fail. But in my judgment the greatest danger is in concession, if the Protestant mind should not be strongly for it; for if the Protestants in Parliament, as well as out of Parliament, think England has sacrificed them, be assured it will never be forgiven. The sense of the Protestants, who, unless there is a revolution like the French one, will always have the power and management, will run against the English Government.' The best course is to be prepared for refusal and resistance, unless the Protestants decidedly desired conciliation.[1]

The general tone of the Catholic Convention, Westmorland acknowledged, was very moderate, and Keogh greatly increased his influence in it by entirely repressing all evidence of a levelling spirit.[2] It was chiefly owing to him that the United Irishmen abstained from sending a deputation to the Catholic Convention, but the Convention passed a warm vote of thanks to Belfast; they determined, contrary to their first intention, not to restrict their petition to votes and juries, but to ask for a full admission to all the rights and privileges of the Constitution, and they sent the delegates who carried this petition to England by way of Belfast, where they were received with a great outburst of popular applause.[3] The main body of the Catholics gave little or no cause for apprehension. General Dundas had been visiting the South, and reported that the food riots at Cork had only become formidable on account of the timidity of the magistrates, that in all the country he passed through the people were perfectly quiet, and that the lower orders appeared absolutely indifferent to political discussions.

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[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 14, 1792.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Wyse's *History of the Catholic Association*, ii. append. p. 13; Grattan's *Life*, iv. 78–80; Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 86, 87.

'The Catholics,' said Westmorland, 'have to my belief no scheme, plan, or thought of insurrection.' In Dublin, opinion was rapidly calming; a strong spirit of loyalty was manifested, and the levelling party appeared inconsiderable, but Defender riots were extending in Louth and Monaghan, though the troops were never resisted. Londonderry was the centre of a most desperate revolutionary spirit, and all through the North volunteering was proceeding rapidly. Ulster alone, at the close of 1792, appeared to the Lord Lieutenant a serious source of danger. On the Catholic question he very significantly observes, 'The temper of the people, with exception to our leading Cabinet friends, is grown much more conciliatory.' [1]

The method of writing history chiefly by extracts from ministerial letters is, I fear, very tedious to readers, but in the particular period with which I am now concerned, it is, I believe, the most trustworthy that can be adopted. That period was not one of salient or dramatic interest, but it was vitally important in Irish history, for it prepared the way, not only for the great Rebellion of 1798, but also for the profound and permanent alienation of the Irish Catholics from England. To ascertain, as far as possible amid conflicting statements, the true sentiments of the different sections of the Irish people, to follow and explain the strangely fluctuating and discordant judgments of the Irish rulers, to disclose the secret springs of their policy as they are revealed in their confidential correspondence, is here the chief duty of the historian. It is plain that the government of the country had become much more difficult since the troubles in France; but if my estimate be correct, it is equally plain that the situation was still far from desperate. The steady progress of material wealth

[1] Westmorland to Pitt, Dec. 18; to Dundas, Dec. 19, 22, 26, 29, 30, 1792.

was making the conditions of life more easy, and in some degree correcting the great evils which were due to the extirpation of Irish manufactures by England. Ulster had caught the passion for reform, but though much speculative republicanism may have existed among the Presbyterians, and though most of the United Irishmen may have convinced themselves that reform could only be extorted by revolution, there were probably very few who would not have been contented with reform. The same assertion may be made still more confidently of the Catholic democracy of the towns, while the great body of the Catholics were as yet almost untouched by politics and completely subservient to landlords and prelates who were devoted to the connection, and extremely hostile to republican ideas. The Catholic prelates were now cordially in favour of the Convention, and the reconciliation of the seceding party to the old Committee had effectually moderated its proceedings.[1] It was plain, however, that large measures of reform were required, and would the Protestants of the Established Church who had the ascendency in Ireland consent to carry them? The Catholic question, as we have seen, had been excluded from the objects of the Whig Club, and when an attempt was made in November to take it into consideration, the resolution was negatived by a majority of thirteen.[2] The Association of the 'Friends of the Constitution,' however, which was a purely Protestant body presided over by the Duke of Leinster, and supported by Grattan, made 'an effectual reform in the representation of the people in Parliament, including persons of all religious persuasions,' its first object.

A clear distinction must here be drawn between the main body of the country gentlemen, lawyers, and yeo-

[1] Plowden, ii. 387, 388. [2] Ibid. 380.

men, and the small group of great borough owners who chiefly controlled the Parliament. There is reason to believe that Grattan truly represented the former, and that a majority at least were quite prepared for Catholic enfranchisement. It is true that the cry of danger to property held under the Act of Settlement had been raised by Fitzgibbon, and had influenced some considerable minds, but there is I think no evidence that it had spread very far. The fact that in our own day popular Irish politics have taken the form of an organised attack upon landed property, will probably mislead those who do not consider how widely the events which we have witnessed, differ from those which were feared in 1792. In our generation a small body of Irish landlords, divested through legislation and social changes of their former political power, and at the same time firmly attached to the connection and the Union, have found themselves confronted by an organisation which was hostile to both, and which accordingly made the expatriation and ruin of the class who were the chief supporters of the English connection one of its main objects. Having signally failed in obtaining the support of the great mass of the Irish tenantry by appeals to national or anti-English sentiment, it skilfully resorted to the policy of appealing to their cupidity; it gave the movement an essentially agrarian character by making it a war against rents, and it thus succeeded for a time in combining them in a dishonest compact to refuse the payment of their debts. The movement was favoured by a period of genuine distress; by some undoubted acts of landlord harshness, committed chiefly by men who had purchased land at the invitation of the Government under the Encumbered Estates Act, and who treated it as an ordinary form of investment; by the system of party government which gives a wholly disproportionate power to isolated groups of members, who

are indifferent to the interests of the Empire; and especially by the passing of a land law which was popularly attributed to the agitation, and which had the undoubted effect of confusing the ownership of land, and of transferring without compensation to one class of the community, a portion of the legal property of another.

But the question in 1792 was not one between landlords and tenants. It was whether existing titles could be seriously disputed by the descendants of those who had been deprived of their properties by the Act of Settlement. The great majority of the descendants of the old families had long since been scattered over the Continent. Nearly one hundred and thirty years had elapsed since the Act that was complained of. Innumerable purchasers, leaseholders, mortgagees, and other encumbrancers had grafted new interests on the existing titles. The security of a great part of the property of the Catholics of Ireland was inextricably blended with them, and the tenantry and the labourers would have gained nothing by their overthrow. Under such circumstances an attempt to impugn them might well be deemed in the highest degree improbable, and the success of such an attempt almost impossible.[1]

But apart from this, the Protestant gentry had little to lose and much to gain by Catholic enfranchisement. The hierarchy of middle men which rose between the cottier and the owner of the soil was a great economical evil, but it at least saved the landowning class from that invidious isolation which is now the great source of their weakness and their unpopularity. Their political ascendency over their tenants was indisputable, and an Act which multiplied the voters on their estates tended directly to their political importance. On grounds of

[1] See a powerful statement of the case in *A Letter to the United Irishmen on the proposed Restoration of Catholic Rights*, by Todd Jones (Dublin, 1792).

interest they had no reason to regret the destruction of the corrupt oligarchical monopoly which had so greatly dwarfed their consequence. On public grounds they had every reason to desire it. They had always murmured against the system of tithes, and their theological feelings were extremely languid.

That the great borough owners were, as a rule, strongly opposed to Catholic enfranchisement is unquestionable, and this fact was the chief difficulty of the situation. It was, however, contended by the supporters of the Catholics that the influence of the Government on this class was overwhelming; that the opposition to Catholic enfranchisement drew its real force from the countenance which was given to it by the leading members of the Irish Government, and that if the Government pronounced decidedly in favour of the measure, all serious opposition to it would melt away. The opinions of Richard Burke derive their special value from his confidential relations with some of the leading members of the Irish Parliament, and a few sentences may here be quoted from a memorial which was presented by him to Lord Grenville in the beginning of November. 'The upper ranks of people,' he wrote, 'who are neither Catholics nor Dissenters, it is commonly thought are almost universally free in their religious opinions, except the women and children.' While the English Ministers had long desired 'to raise the Catholics from their intolerable oppression,' 'the effective part of the Irish Administration had formed a conspiracy to perpetuate that servitude,' set themselves at the head of the Protestant faction, 'and brought out the grand juries and corporations in order to embarrass the English Government.' The ministerial press is full of violent attacks on the Catholics and their supporters. 'The Protestant ascendency,' a new term, is much come into vogue. A report has been industriously spread that

the English Ministers were encouraging the Catholics in order to bring about a legislative union, and 'the word union in the popular phraseology of this country signifies a conspiracy against the liberties of Ireland.' 'If the Irish Ministers say there is any difficulty in carrying any measure for the Catholics, they deceive the King. The opposition to it is artificial, and a ministerial instigation. It will cease when the cause is withdrawn. I have seen some of the great Parliament men. One of the first of them (and commonly supposed to be the most hostile to the Catholics) said, Let Mr. Pitt send an order that it *shall* be done, and it will be done. He gave me to understand he was very willing to do his part. . . . He expressly denied that the sense of the Protestant gentlemen was to be taken from the grand juries. . . . When the Catholics are restored to their constitutional rights, it will be the most popular measure of his Majesty's Government—I mean among the Protestants of Ireland.'[1]

The English Government appears to have to a great extent adopted this view. The decisive word against the Catholics for which Lord Westmorland had so long waited was never uttered; but instead of it, after a long period of hesitation, there came a clear intimation that the English Ministers were resolved to insist on the liberal policy they had formerly recommended. In November, Pitt wrote that from inquiries made by a confidential agent in Birmingham he had reason to fear that the Irish Catholics were very generally armed, and that 'any opposition to their Convention would be the signal for a general rising.' 'My opinion,' he said, 'is invariable as to the necessity of vigorously resisting force or menace; but the more I think on the subject the more I regret that firmness against violence is not

[1] Nov. 4, 1792 (Record Office).

accompanied by symptoms of a disposition to conciliate, and by holding out at least the possibility of future concession in return for a perseverance in peaceable and loyal conduct. . . . If the contest is necessary to support regular government and to resist the appearance of violence, I think the sort of support I have mentioned will be readily given from hence to that extent. But if the Protestants of Ireland rely on the weight of this country being employed to enforce the principle that in no case anything more is to be conceded to peaceable and constitutional applications from Catholics, that reliance I think will fail, and I fairly own that in the present state of the world I think such a system cannot ultimately succeed. . . . I state this without reserve to yourself. You may be assured that not the slightest intimation of this nature has been given by me to any one connected with the Catholics. . . . I am sorry to say the news from the Continent is far from improving.'[1]

This last sentence was probably by no means irrelevant to the determination of the Government. The events in Flanders spread universal disquietude through England, and were gradually persuading the ministers that they were on the eve of a struggle, which would task all the resources of the Empire. 'Under the present circumstances of this country and of Europe,' wrote Dundas about a month later, 'it is particularly desirable, if it be possible, to avoid any occasion which might lead those who are in general attached to order and regular government to join themselves with persons of opposite principles. It seems, therefore, to be of the utmost consequence not to lose the assistance of the Catholics in support of the established Constitution.' He accordingly directs the Lord Lieutenant to 'hold a language of conciliation' towards them, and he announces

[1] Pitt to Westmorland, Nov. 10, 1792.

his positive conviction that it is for the interest of the Protestants of Ireland, as well as the Empire at large, that the Catholics, if peaceable and loyal, should obtain 'participation, on the same terms with Protestants, in the elective franchise and the formation of juries.'[1]

After the letters I have quoted, the decision could not have been agreeable to the Lord Lieutenant, but he declared himself ready to execute the wishes of the ministers, and to endeavour to 'guide the opinions of his Majesty's servants' towards conciliation. The task, he said, was very difficult, as 'the Chancellor, the Speaker, and many other of the confidential friends of Government, are averse to its policy.' But 'the circumstances of Europe, which have their effect in this country, make such a risk expedient and perhaps unavoidable.' 'With regard to the dispositions of the persons of weight and influence in Ireland, who have acted in opposition to Government,' he said, 'I believe that Lord Shannon, Mr. Conolly, and Mr. Ponsonby are still decided in resisting the Catholic claim, if they could see the practicability of success. . . . The Duke of Leinster and Mr. Grattan have decided for the Catholics, and also for a reform in Parliament, and their object will be to induce the Catholics to assist in this scheme. Our endeavours, on the contrary, will be pointed to detach them from such pursuits. The northern counties are growing extremely violent for effecting reform in Parliament, and are raising volunteer associations with this view. It will, I fear, be necessary to increase our forces in that part of the kingdom, and I could wish that a frigate were stationed at Belfast with a view to overawe that town.'[2] It was reported that serious disturbances had broken out at

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Dec. 17, 1792.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 29.

Louth, and 'the levelling system, under the mask of reform, is spreading furiously.' 'The source of all the mischief is the town of Belfast. The merchants of that town are the persons principally at the bottom of it.' Keogh is connected with the worst of the agitators. 'He is a reformer and a leveller, and be assured no Catholic concession will answer his purpose.'[1] 'I cannot help thinking,' wrote the Chief Secretary, 'there is more ground for alarm in this country than in any part of the King's dominions. Our security is in the army, and if that is not kept up, the levellers of the North will overawe every part of the kingdom. Recollect that we have no militia, and that the volunteering system affords every man almost a right to arms.'[2] 'The levelling spirit is spreading so fast here, and such pains are taking to raise volunteer corps connected with it, that a considerable military force will be necessary in Ireland.'[3] An address had already been issued by the United Irishmen to the volunteers, to convene a Protestant assembly at Dungannon, for the purpose of urging a reform of Parliament.[4]

The crisis was a very anxious one. 'Though I do believe,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'at this moment we can carry the Catholic concession of juries and elective franchise, yet it is a concession of fear and not inclination.' 'It is a most delicate and difficult business. I own I am more afraid of the weakening of Government in other points than even of the Catholic concessions.'[5] The intended Speech from the Throne, as sent over to England, contained no allusion to the Catholics, but the English Ministers inserted a clause in their favour, and peremptorily enjoined that it should be read. The Lord Lieutenant said that he would obey, but that both

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Dec. 29.
[2] Ibid. Jan. 1, 1793.
[3] Ibid. Jan. 9, 1793.
[4] Ibid. Dec. 20, 1792.
[5] Westmorland to Dundas, Dec. 29, 1792.

the Chancellor and the Speaker considered it most mischievous, and he once more asked for a declaration that this concession was to be the last.[1] 'You may pretty well argue the unpleasantness and difficulty of my situation,' he continued, 'when the men of talent and lead in his Majesty's service consider themselves sacrificed, particularly by the subject being mentioned in the Speech. They are all in so unpleasant a temper that I can hardly persuade them to consult upon anything.'[2]

If the government of Ireland had been conducted upon principles which were really constitutional, there would have been at this time a great change of persons. A complete revolution of policy was contemplated, and it was to be carried in opposition to the known opinion of Lord Westmorland's Government. In 1792 the Parliament had refused to concede to the Catholics the county franchise, even when it had been so artificially and unequally limited that only an infinitesimal fraction of them could have benefited by it. It had formally, and by an immense majority, ordered a perfectly respectful petition, asking for some share in the franchise, to be removed from the table, and the leading persons in the Government had placed themselves at the head of an anti-Catholic movement, which was based, not on grounds of mere temporary expediency, but on the ground that any admission of Catholics to political power would be fatal to the Constitution. The same ministers were now to support in the same Parliament a Bill for conceding to Catholics the county franchise on exactly the same terms as to the Protestants. Among the great unwritten changes in the Constitution which in England had followed the Revolution of 1688, none was more

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 9, 1793.
[2] Ibid. Jan. 11, 1793.

important than the gradual establishment of the maxim that, when the policy of a particular set of ministers is discarded, those ministers should resign their seats in favour of the men who have identified themselves with the policy that has triumphed. By such means only can the consistency of parties, the authority of Government, and the character of statesmen be maintained, and when, as in 1829 and 1846, the disposition of parties renders such a change impossible, a great blow is given both to public confidence and to party government. But in Ireland policies did not change with the ebb and flow of opinion manifested at general elections, and ministers held their power by a wholly different tenure from those in England.

It is a remarkable fact that, even after the Parliament met, the Government were uncertain what measure of relief was to be granted to the Catholics. The Catholic deputation was very graciously received by the King, and dismissed in a manner which clearly showed that the ministers desired a Relief Bill, but no exact measures were specified, and the delegates were referred to the 'wisdom and liberality of the Irish Parliament.' This, like most of the proceedings of the English Ministers on the Catholic question, was exceedingly displeasing to the Irish Government, but Dundas, in a long and able letter, defended his conduct. It was impossible, he said, that a respectful petition from a great body of the King's subjects should not be presented, and it was equally impossible that it should be received with a 'sullen silence.' 'Your Excellency,' he proceeds, 'in your letter of the 9th expresses an opinion that concession to the Catholics would be more palatable among the Protestants of Ireland if they were assured that what they now did was to be understood as the ultimatum. . . . It must immediately occur to your Excellency, that before it was possible for me to speak with

any precision on that proposition, it would be necessary for me to know what is the extent of the concessions the Irish Government is willing to concur with. . . . We are perfectly ready to declare it to be our firm determination to resist any attempt to subvert the Protestant Establishment of Ireland, and to maintain the frame of government in King, Lords and Commons; but unfortunately we and his Majesty's confidential servants in Ireland differ essentially as to the best mode of securing those objects.' More than a year had passed—so the Lord Lieutenant was reminded—since Dundas had urged that the best way to attach the Irish Catholics to the Constitution was to give them some share of its benefits, but he had not been fortunate enough to convince the Irish Government, and accordingly the experiment had not been tried. The concessions which might then have quieted the Catholics would now be insufficient, and the Irish Ministers were implored 'to give a candid and liberal consideration to the whole of this subject, and to weigh well the consequences of leaving behind any sore point of the question.' He earnestly hoped that the franchise and the juries might be conceded without resistance, and that Catholics might at least be admitted to such civil and military offices as are merely offices of emolument, if the state of Protestant opinion will not allow of their admission to offices of magisterial authority or political power. His knowledge of the special circumstances of Ireland was not sufficient to enable him to say whether the admission of Catholics to municipal franchises, guilds, and corporations, was feasible or expedient, but he was clearly of opinion that all laws which cramped their industry or restrained them in the exercise of any trade or manufacture must be repealed, and that they should be eligible for all political situations in corporations which were open to Protestant Dissenters. He was also quite

ready to admit them freely to the army. The Catholics complained that they were disabled from founding any university, college, or endowed school. If this be so, it was a grievance which ought certainly to be remedied, for nothing could be more impolitic than to compel Catholics, by such restrictions, to educate their children in foreign seminaries. The complaint that they could not obtain degrees in Dublin University seemed less reasonable, for their admission would be inconsistent with the foundation of the University. If, however, on account of this incapacity they were at a disadvantage in pursuing the professions of law or physic, some steps must be taken to remove the injury. Their last complaint was that they could not carry arms without a special licence. Dundas fully agreed with the Irish Government that it would be unwise to allow the indiscriminate use of arms to all classes of the community, and he commended this subject to the special attention of the Irish Parliament. It ought, however, to be dealt with on general principles, and not with any reference to religious beliefs. 'There are some Protestants in Ireland whose principles render them much more unsafe to be trusted with arms than many of those professing the Catholic religion.'[1]

The memorable session of 1793 opened on January 10. The Speech from the Throne was eminently warlike. It deplored the disturbances that had broken out in different parts of the kingdom, the evident desire of some persons to excite a spirit of discontent, and effect by violence an alteration in the Constitution, the ambition of France which had led her to interfere with the government of other countries, and especially her conduct towards 'his Majesty's allies the States-General,'

[1] Dundas to Westmorland, Jan. (the day not given) 1793. The petition had been presented to the King on the 2nd. See Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 89, 90.

which was 'neither conformable to the law of nations nor the positive stipulations of existing treaties,' and which was especially blamable as 'both his Majesty and the States-General had observed the strictest neutrality with regard to the affairs of France.' It announced an augmentation of the forces; a prohibition of the export of corn, provisions, naval stores, arms and ammunition, and the establishment of a militia, and it contained the following clause which had been inserted in England: 'I have it in particular command from his Majesty to recommend it to you to apply yourselves to the consideration of such measures as may be most likely to strengthen and cement a general union of sentiment among all classes and descriptions of his Majesty's subjects in support of the established Constitution; with this view his Majesty trusts that the situation of his Majesty's Catholic subjects will engage your serious attention, and in the consideration of this subject he relies on the wisdom and liberality of his Parliament.'[1]

Apart from its substance, the phraseology of this clause was very significant. From the Revolution to the reign of George III. the Catholics had always been designated in official documents as 'Papists,' or 'persons professing the Popish religion.' In 1792 it was observed that this phraseology was changed, and in Langrishe's Relief Act, and in the Speech from the Throne, the term 'Roman Catholic' was employed. In the first viceregal speech in 1793 the qualification was dropped, and for the first time since the Parliament of James II. the term 'Catholic' was employed from the Throne.[2]

The address was moved in the House of Commons

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 3.

[2] See Mant's *History of the Church of Ireland*, ii. 721–725. In the closing speech of the session the Lord Lieutenant reverted to the term 'Roman Catholic.'

by Lord Tyrone, and seconded in a short speech by Arthur Wesley, who little dreamed how great a part he was destined to bear in closing, both on the Continent and in Ireland, the series of events which opened in this year. The Chief Secretary noticed that there was but little difference of opinion, and that not a single man spoke on either side of the House who did not express in forcible terms his reprobation of everything leading to tumult or disorder or French principles of government.[1] Grattan in a long and powerful speech marked out clearly the line of his policy. He began by a formidable attack on the ministry. The state of the country was indeed alarming, and public opinion was profoundly disquieted, but this was the inevitable and predicted result of the Government policy about reform and about the Catholics. The bitterest opponents of the Constitution of 1782 were in power, and their manifest and almost avowed design was to make that Constitution an empty name. The periodical 'sales of the House of Commons,' the public declaration of these sales, the recent creation of twenty new parliamentary places for the sake of corruption, the sale of peerages, the patronage of all kinds of abuses and peculations, the systematic rejection of every constitutional Bill which tended to diminish corruption or assimilate the Irish Constitution to that of Great Britain; 'these things and many more, taken separately or all together, have totally and universally deprived of all weight, authority, or credit, the Parliament of Ireland.' The ministers meant to attack the Constitution, but they have gone far to undermine the Throne, and if the writings of Paine were now popular in Ireland, if irregular conventions and associations were everywhere multiplying, this was mainly because constitutional reform had been steadily

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 11, 1793.

resisted, and because the Irish Government was one of the most anomalous and most corrupt in Christendom.

The policy of the ministers towards the Catholics has been not less infatuated. They have driven them into the paths of agitation, discredited their most respectable leaders, irritated them by empty menaces, created a religious war by exerting against them all their influence over the grand juries and the Corporation of Dublin. At the same time, on the question of assisting England against France, and on the evil of the levelling principles that were abroad, Grattan spoke in no faltering terms. 'He condemned the spirit of disturbance'—so the Chief Secretary reported to England —'and every design to effect by violence an alteration in the Constitution. He approved of the preparatory measures taken for the security of this kingdom. He considered the decree of the French Convention generally expressed against all crowned heads, as a declaration against the King of Great Britain and Ireland, and of course as a declaration of war against those nations. . . . He admitted generally the propriety of an augmentation of the army, of an effectual militia, and of the proclamation of an embargo. . . . He spoke strongly in favour of the Roman Catholic claims, but looked upon a reform in Parliament to be the most essential measure for allaying the discontents and giving satisfaction to the nation. He expressed himself with great warmth and duty and loyalty to the King. He pointed out the happy frame of our Constitution. He urged the advantage and necessity of the connection between Great Britain and this kingdom, and reprobated in pointed terms' the principles of the French Revolution.[1]

There was no division on the address, but an

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 11.

amendment moved by Grattan was carried unanimously. It thanked the King for having in this critical period taken 'a leading part in healing the political dissensions of his people on account of religion.' It pledged the House to take the subject thus recommended from the Throne into immediate consideration, and 'at a time when doctrines pernicious to freedom and dangerous to monarchical government are propagated in foreign countries . . . to impress his Majesty's Catholic subjects with a sense of the singular and eternal obligations they owe to the Throne, and to his Majesty's royal person and family.'[1]

The tone of the debate was not unhappily described by Langrishe, as 'acrimonious unanimity.' It was evident that one party was displeased at what they regarded as the sacrifice of Protestant ascendency, that another party was determined to press the question of parliamentary reform, and was likely to receive a very unexpected measure of support, that the ministers had lost all their credit and a great part of their controlling power. It was generally felt in Parliament that they had dangerously mismanaged affairs, that their policy had been reversed, that they had no longer the confidence of England, that they were introducing a policy which was not their own, and to the credit of which they had no just title. They were themselves in no good humour with their colleagues in England, and even the fact that the Irish Parliament was evidently quite ready to follow them in carrying a large measure of Catholic relief, must have been not a little embarrassing to statesmen who in reality detested the measure they were introducing, and who had been so long and so urgently impressing on the English Cabinet the enormous difficulties of the task. Men so acute as Pitt

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 30.

and Dundas can hardly have failed to detect in the letters from Ireland the true outlines of the situation.

'Concessions to the Catholics,' wrote Hobart, 'will certainly be acceded to by all parties to an extent which last year nothing could have effected, but it is perfectly understood that the concession has become irresistible from the encouragement which has been given in England and promoted by the success of the French arms and probability of war. French and levelling principles have been reprobated by every man who has spoken in the House of Commons, and every expression of loyalty conveyed in the strongest terms, by Mr. Grattan particularly, whose praises of the monarchical part of the Constitution can only be equalled by his desire to cripple the Executive Government. His object manifestly is to make it impracticable for any man to govern Ireland but himself, and until he has the House of Commons completely at his disposal he will never permit the country to be quiet. In order to effect this point he has entrapped the aristocracy into an acquiescence in the principle of reform, and he pretended to concede to them the credit and conduct of the measure. . . . Notwithstanding the loyalty which is professed to be the predominant passion of the day in Ireland, you may be assured that the intention is materially to lessen the power of the Crown, which, by a seeming acquiescence, I trust we shall be able to prevent in any great degree, but I apprehend there will be a necessity of concurring in most if not all of the Whig Club measures, Responsibility, Police, Pension, and Place Bills. The ill temper of many of our friends is not to be described.'[1]

In the House of Lords, Fitzgibbon with his usual cynical candour lost no time in expressing his senti-

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 16, 1793. Grattan's *Life*, iv. 85, 86.

ments. He was a leading member of an Administration which was especially charged with the task of conciliating the Catholics, and inducing the Irish Parliament to confer on them the elective franchise. In the debate on the address he immediately distinguished himself by a fierce attack on the Catholic petition to the King, and declared that 'he would cheerfully give relief to the Roman Catholics, provided it should not extend to give effective situation in the State.'[1]

It was quite evident that the policy of conciliating the Catholics without doing anything in the direction of reform could not be sustained, and the spirit of reform in the House was much stronger than might have been expected. The reader may attribute this fact as he pleases, to a factious desire to embarrass the Government, or to the wish of the independent or alienated members of the aristocracy to propose themselves as a possible Government, or to simple panic, or to the deliberate conviction of men who were well acquainted with the country, that without a speedy and a serious reform the levelling spirit in the North would inevitably lead to a great catastrophe. Whatever may be the explanation, the fact at least is certain. On January 14 William Ponsonby and Conolly, who were two of the most important members of the Irish Commons unconnected with the Government, gave notice of an intended Reform Bill, and Grattan, while strongly supporting them, moved for a Committee to inquire into the abuses in the Constitution. No plan was as yet proposed, but the Chief Secretary noticed that the principle was strongly asserted, that representation should depend on property. 'The sentiments of the House,' he continued, 'in favour of reform were so universal that it was in vain to resist them, and upon

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 11, 1793.

the question being called for, there were not above two or three negatives, and the House did not divide.'[1] Lord Kingsborough immediately after brought in a Bill to tax absentees. 'An idea has been recently admitted,' wrote the Chief Secretary, 'into men's minds in this country, which is of all others the most injurious to English Government . . . that there is a perfect indifference in England with regard to Ireland. . . . Be assured that unless Great Britain speedily interferes energetically with regard to Ireland, we shall have commotions of a very serious nature. . . . They are now setting up the King against the Government with a view to undermine the Constitution. It is precisely the French system, and in my opinion will produce the same consequences unless it is taken up decidedly. . . . Believe no man that would persuade you that Keogh's party, and it leads the Catholics, are not republicans.'[2]

On February 4 Hobart moved for leave to bring in his Catholic Relief Bill, and stated the nature of its provisions. It was of a kind which only a year before would have appeared utterly impossible, and which was in the most glaring opposition to all the doctrines which the Government and its partisans had of late been urging. He proposed to give Catholics the franchise both in towns and in country on exactly the same terms as Protestants; to repeal the laws which still excluded them from grand juries except when there was not a sufficient number of Protestant freeholders, and from petty juries in causes between Protestants and Papists; to authorise them to endow colleges, universities, and schools, and to obtain degrees in Dublin University, and to remove any provisions of the law which might still impose disabilities upon them respecting personal property. He proposed to enable them to

[1] Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 15, 1793. [2] Ibid. Jan. 19, 1793.

become magistrates, to vote for magistrates in corporations, and to carry arms, subject, however, to a property qualification. They were also, with the concurrence of the English Government, to be admitted to bear commissions in the army and navy, and with a few specified exceptions all civil offices were to be thrown open to them.

This great measure was before Parliament, with several intermissions, for rather more than five weeks. The chief arguments on both sides have been already given, but the true state and division of opinions is a question of much interest and of some difficulty. If we judged only by the letters from the Castle, we should infer that the majority of the House would gladly have conceded nothing, and there is strong reason to believe that the Irish Government, during the greater part of the time when the question was pending, made it a main object to alarm as much as possible the ministers in England, and to induce them to recede from the position they had taken. On the other hand it is a simple fact that this great and complicated measure, which revolutionised the whole system of government in Ireland, and presented so many openings for attack, passed through Parliament almost entirely unmodified, and without even any serious opposition. The vital clause giving the unlimited franchise to Catholics was the most contested, and it was carried by 144 to 72. Hobart, in one of his speeches during the debates, expressly stated that he found 'little difference' in the House on the principles of the Bill, and 'no objection to going into a committee upon it.'[1] The vast preponderance of speakers were in favour of relief to Catholics, though there were grave differences as to the degree, and speakers of the highest authority repre-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 271.

sented the genuine Protestant feeling of the country as being in its favour. 'The levelling principle with which this country is threatened,' said Daly, 'has within the last three or four months drawn the Protestants and Catholics closer than I think fifty years of social intercourse would have done.'[1] Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, revealed the true sentiments of the Government when he lamented the necessity for introducing the measure, but he also expressed his belief that 'the liberality of the public mind . . . would of itself alone have totally obliterated all distinctions in twenty years, and Protestants and Roman Catholics would have coalesced, by moderate and gradual concession on one side, and rational gratitude and affection on the other.'[2] John O'Neil, the representative of the great Protestant county of Antrim, and one of the most important and respected country gentlemen in the House of Commons, did not hesitate to assert that 'the claim of the Catholics was now universally admitted from one end of the kingdom to the other.'[3]

There was, however, a certain party which still openly opposed the concession of any political power to the Catholics. Its most prominent, or at least its most pertinacious member, was Dr. Duigenan, the Advocate-General, an honest and able man with considerable knowledge of law and of ecclesiastical antiquity, but coarse, eccentric, quarrelsome, intolerably violent and vituperative, and much more of the type of a controversial theologian than of a secular statesman. He sprang from a very humble Catholic family, and had originally been designed for the priesthood, but he broke away from the religion of his parents and became through his whole life its most vehement and acrimonious assailant. His speeches, heavily laden with

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 317. [2] Ibid. 321. [3] Ibid. 310.

citations from Church councils and from obsolete provisions of the canon law, were ridiculed by Curran as resembling 'the unrolling of an old mummy—nothing but old bones and rotten rags,' and he never appears to have had much weight in Parliament, though his agreement with the Chancellor on the Catholic question, and his strenuous support of the Union, secured for him a large measure of official promotion. He deplored that any part of the penal code had been repealed, expressed his hope that Parliament would seriously consider the policy of re-enacting it, described the hostility between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland as necessary and perennial, and broadly stated that 'no Irish Catholic is, ever was, or ever will be a faithful, loyal subject of a British Protestant king or a Protestant Government.'[1]

He was strongly supported by George Ogle, the accomplished and very popular member for the county of Wexford, who predicted that the admission of Catholics to political power would ultimately lead either to separation or to a legislative union,[2] and also by David la Touche, who in the previous session had moved the rejection of the Catholic petition, and who seems still to have retained much of the old Huguenot dread of Popery. La Touche was not an orator, but he spoke with the weight of a great commercial position, and of a character very eminently distinguished for its integrity and its benevolence. In the last of the Irish Parliaments no less than five members of the name sat together in the House of Commons, and his family may claim what is in truth the highest honour of which an Irish family can boast—that during many successive Governments and in a period of the most lavish corruption, it possessed great parliamentary influence, and yet passed through political life untitled and unstained.

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[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 120, 127. [2] Ibid. 138.

But by far the ablest man in the House of Commons, who on this occasion opposed the Catholic claims, was the Speaker Foster. He had taken a prominent part in the preceding year in the violent movement of the grand juries against the Catholics, and his conduct on this occasion had been spoken of with much bitterness both by Grattan and Burke. His speech, however, in 1793 was certainly not a violent one. It is admirably reported, and it seems to me an almost perfect model of what parliamentary eloquence should be. It is eminently the speech of a secular statesman free from any tinge of bigotry, and with no desire to offend any class of his countrymen, and he boasted with truth, that he had steadily supported every relaxation of the penal code which secured to the Catholics religious liberty and full rights in the possession of property. Political power, however, he maintained, is a question not of right but of expediency, and he argued with a force and vividness that no other member had equalled, that the inevitable result of the admission of the Catholics to power would be the eventual ascendency of a Catholic democracy which would break down the whole existing establishment in Church and State. Like Westmorland he contended that it was only the intervention of England, that had given the question importance. He painted in strong colours the confusion and panic which it had produced, and he warned the Protestants of Ireland that if they carried Catholic emancipation, Catholic gratitude, if it existed at all, would not centre on them. It was well known, he said, that the concession did not originate in this kingdom. 'There has been a race for the Catholics, and such of you as have entered the lists have been outrun.'

The main difficulty, however, which the Government had to encounter did not come from the small party of

resistance. In calculating the parliamentary forces, the Lord Lieutenant had always counted upon the opposition of the Ponsonbys to the policy of relief. It was a family powerful from the parliamentary abilities of the two brothers who represented it, powerful from its connections and its large borough influence, and powerful from the close friendship which existed between Grattan and its leaders. As we have already seen, however, when the question of Catholic suffrage was raised in the preceding year, George Ponsonby had been opposed to Grattan, though the tone of his opposition had been very moderate. His argument had been that the Catholics were still unfit for the franchise, and that the concession of political power ought to be preceded by an extended system of united education.

He now, to the extreme indignation of Westmorland, adopted a new line of policy, but one which was not, in my opinion, really inconsistent with his previous conduct. The concession of Catholic franchise had become inevitable. The English Government had encouraged it. The Irish Government had formally committed itself to it, and the hopes of the Catholics had been raised to fever point. The Government measure was denounced by Ponsonby as mischievous alike in its nature and its design. Last session the Government had opposed the admission of Catholics to the most qualified right of suffrage, and had induced the Parliament to reject a petition in its favour. In the recess, leading officials connected with the Government had been busily employed in exciting the counties and corporations to resist the claims of the Catholics, and the party in the Corporation of Dublin which was subservient to Government influence had been urged to set the example to the whole kingdom by their manifesto for Protestant ascendency. Everything that could be done was done by those in authority to per-

suade the Irish Protestants that it was the determination of the Government that the Catholics should not be granted the franchise. 'But what opinion,' continued Ponsonby, 'is to be formed of the intention of that Cabinet, when the minister in this country never once intimated the smallest intention of ceding the franchise to the Catholics—never once consulted the Protestant gentlemen of the country upon the subject until it was intimated in the Speech from the Throne, and followed up by the Bill of the minister, now before the House? . . . What other conclusion can be deduced from this but that the division of the people was the object of the British Minister, who, while he was using his influence with the Protestants in public to resist the Catholic claims, was telling the Catholic in private that it was not from the generosity of a Protestant Parliament he had anything to hope, but that any favour he had to expect he must hope only through the influence of the minister in this House?'

It was the old policy of England, 'which in order to check and govern one party by another made separate interests;' which played off the Catholics against the Protestants; which was now endeavouring to form a separate Catholic interest inimical to the Protestant gentry. There was but one way 'to prevent in future such things, and to cut up by the roots all the powers and all the stratagems of the British Minister for dividing the people of this country.' It was to reject the Government measure, and to carry a new Bill which would really settle the question by giving to the Catholics 'everything Parliament had to give with liberality and confidence, admitting them to a full participation to the rights of the Constitution, and thus binding their gratitude and their attachment to their Protestant fellow-subjects.' The Government measure, he argued, was not one

either of finality or of real conciliation. Will the Catholic gentleman—a man of education, of ambition, perhaps of distinguished ability—acquiesce in a decision which admits the most ignorant and turbulent of his co-religionists to an equality with the Protestants in respect to the suffrage to which alone in political life they could aspire, while he is himself marked out as inferior to the Protestant gentry by his exclusion from Parliament? Nothing short of a full and equal share in the Constitution will now be sufficient. There are dangers no doubt to be feared from the abolition of all religious distinctions in Ireland, but the time has come when they must be faced. They are far less than those which would result from a policy which gave the Catholics the substance of power while it left them under the galling sense of inferiority, and which taught them to look to the English Minister and not to the Irish Parliament for future favours.[1]

To the great alarm of the Lord Lieutenant, it was evident that Ponsonby carried with him the sentiments of a large section of the House of Commons. 'The members of the Opposition,' complained the Chief Secretary, 'condemned the measure as not being conciliatory.' 'Mr. Conolly in strong terms condemned these half measures . . . and said that the Roman Catholics would not be satisfied without a total abolition of every limitation and incapacity. . . . Several gentlemen who have been in the habit of supporting Government, declared for a total abolition.' 'I cannot well express to you the general dissatisfaction and resentment that prevailed among a considerable number of the strongest friends of Government. . . . The Opposition has determined to take all the merit of the concessions from the Administration by going further than we pro-

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 273–275, 327, 328.

posed.'[1] The Duke of Leinster was on the side of Ponsonby, and 'Lord Abercorn had sent over instructions to his friends to move a grant of everything to the Catholics.'[2] Grattan, in perfect consistency with his previous career, strongly urged that the Government should complete their measure by admitting Catholics to Parliament, and the great preponderance of argument in the debates was plainly on that side.

In truth, the long agitation of O'Connell has given the admission of Catholics to Parliament an altogether factitious magnitude in the public mind. It was the culmination of a long struggle for political equality, but in real importance it was immeasurably inferior to the Irish Act of 1793, which gave the great bulk of the Irish Catholics the franchise. Catholic constituencies have never found any difficulty in obtaining Protestants to act as their instruments, and with the leverage which was now obtained they were certain to obtain the rest. One member predicted, with admirable accuracy, the event which took place in Clare in 1828. 'Suppose,' said Ormsby, 'the electors should choose a Roman Catholic and persist in returning him, as in the case of Mr. Wilkes in England, the House would then be committed with the people, a situation which he was sure they did not desire.'[3] Few greater mistakes of policy could be made than to give political equality to the great mass of ignorant Catholics, who were for the most part far below political interests, and at the same time to refuse it to the Catholic gentry. The continued disability was certain to produce renewed agitation, and it was equally certain that this agitation would be ultimately successful. The disability fell on the very class

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[1] Hobart to Nepean, Feb. 5, 1793.

[2] Cooke to Nepean, Feb. 26.

[3] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 308.

which would feel it most keenly and which deserved it least. Whatever controversy there might be about the sentiments of the mass of the Catholic peasantry or of the Catholic priesthood, there was at least no question that the few Catholic gentry of Ireland had shown themselves for generations uniformly and almost effusively loyal. The presence of ten or twenty members of this class in Parliament would have had a conciliatory effect out of all proportion to its real importance, and it could have had no effect but for good. 'By giving the Catholics equality of suffrage,' said Hamilton, 'with the Protestants, Parliament would invest the lower, the more numerous, and of course the less enlightened part of the Catholic community with that privilege which must in fact include every other; and yet if it went no farther it would establish an exclusion which, even if it were desirable, must be but temporary and ineffectual, against the higher and more enlightened order, against those men who had the deepest stake in the country, and who from every motive of interest and ambition must be pledged, as much as they were themselves, for its prosperity and advantage.' 'I should be sorry,' added the same speaker, 'if the disseminators of sedition should have it in their power to tell the people that Parliament had not followed the example of their constituents, who had generously offered the participation of their rights to their fellow-subjects of every description, while their representatives persisted in retaining an exclusive monopoly. . . . Every motive of expediency and wisdom suggested to the House that this was the moment when every distinction should be done away.'[1]

These appear to me to have been words of wisdom, and there was another argument which was not less weighty. As I have already shown, Grattan had always

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 314, 315.

foreseen that by far the greatest danger which the peculiar circumstances of Ireland foreshadowed, was that the ignorant and excitable Catholic population might be one day detached from the influence of property and respectability, and might become a prey to designing agitators and demagogues. By giving full political power to the Catholic democracy, and at the same time withholding political power and influence from the Catholic gentry, the legislation of 1793 materially hastened this calamity, and it was in the long popular agitation for Catholic emancipation that the foundation was laid for the political anarchy of our own day.

The question whether Catholic emancipation might have been completely carried in 1793 is not one that can be answered with perfect confidence, but I have myself little doubt that if the great influence of the Government had been exerted in its favour, it was perfectly feasible. The Irish Government, however, hated all concessions to the Catholics, and dreaded above all things the inclination of the English Ministers in their favour. The English Ministers were told that the Opposition in advocating the final abolition of political distinctions was actuated by merely factious motives; that the party in its favour was really small, though resentment and desperation had made it important; that if the Government attempted to go further their followers would revolt against them, and defeat them; that the Catholics were fully satisfied with the Government measure.[1] Pitt and Dundas had no wish to renew their long controversy with their representatives in Ireland, or to raise unnecessarily a new Irish question at a time when they were just entering upon a European war. It is worthy, however, of notice that while the

[1] Cooke to Nepean, Feb. 26; Hobart to Nepean, Feb. 26, 1793.

great independent interests in Parliament had committed themselves to the principle of admitting the Catholics to Parliament, there was absolutely no sign of opposition or indignation in the country, and the tone of the debates appears clearly to show that the proposition had excited very little serious hostility. A motion to introduce into the Government Bill a clause admitting Catholics to Parliament was proposed by Mr. George Knox and seconded by Major Doyle, who claimed to have been the earliest advocate in Parliament of complete emancipation.[1] The speech of the mover was remarkably sensible and moderate. He advocated his motion as intended to set at rest a dangerous and difficult question; as the necessary corollary of the measures which enabled Catholics to purchase landed property, and gave them the suffrage; as an eminently conservative measure which would give the property and education in the Catholic body an increase of political importance corresponding to that which was given to ignorance and numbers. The whole weight of the Government, however, was thrown against him, and he was defeated by 163 to 69. It is a remarkable fact that the future Duke of Wellington was put forward by the Government as the chief opponent of the motion. 'He had no objection,' he said, 'to giving Roman Catholics the benefits of the Constitution, and in his opinion the Bill conferred them in an ample degree; but the motion of the honourable gentleman seemed calculated to promote disunion. With the Bill as it stands the Protestants are satisfied, and the Roman Catholics contented. Why then agitate a question which may disturb both?'[2]

It would be curious to know whether Wellington

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[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 278. See, too, Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 145.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 313.

remembered this speech in 1829, when the unsettled question of Catholic emancipation had brought Ireland to the verge of civil war, when the agitation it aroused had ranged the main body of the Irish Catholics under the guidance of demagogues and priests, and had given a death-blow to the political influence of the landlords over their tenantry, and when he was himself obliged to set the fatal example of yielding to the fear of rebellion a measure which he had pledged himself to oppose. If the Catholic question had been settled in 1793, the whole subsequent history of Ireland would probably have been changed. The rebellion of 1798 would almost certainly either never have taken place, or have been confined to an insignificant disturbance in the North, and the social and political convulsions which were produced by the agitations of the present century might have been wholly or in a great measure averted.

In addition to the policies I have already described, there was another policy advocated in the Irish Parliament with extraordinary ability by Sir Lawrence Parsons. His great speech on the Catholic question in 1793 is exceedingly valuable to students of Irish history, and especially to those who, like the present writer, are making it their main task to reproduce as far as possible the modes of thought, feeling, and reasoning prevailing among the different classes of Irishmen. In the eyes of every true statesman, he said, it was evident that the question of the extension of privileges to the Catholics, and the question of parliamentary reform, were intimately connected. 'The extent of what you give to the Catholics depends upon the reform, and the effect of the reform depends upon the extent of franchise you give to the Catholics.' The country cannot prosper as long as it continues in the present state of fermentation on these two questions, until something is done on both of them which will content reasonable and mode-

rate men, and give the Government a weight of authority that will enable it to repress sedition.

The position of the Catholics in Ireland had been determined by the events that followed the Revolution and by the penal code. It is a dark page of Irish history, and one on which he would gladly throw a veil; but, like Charlemont and like his great master Flood,[1] Parsons refused to subscribe to the ordinary condemnation of the Irish statesmen of the early part of the century. 'If a spirit of intolerance is imputable to them, it is a hundred times more imputable to their great and enlightened neighbours in England and France, not to mention all the other kingdoms of Europe in which, till the other day, the most barbarous persecutions on account of religion were practised.' The measures of Lewis XIV. against the French Protestants, and the English laws after the Revolution against the English Catholics, were more severe than any in Ireland, and they had not the same excuse. The French Protestants and the English Catholics were far too weak to be a serious danger to

[1] It is worthy of notice that Parsons—who was himself a man of very distinguished ability—evidently considered Flood by far the greatest man who had appeared in Irish politics in the latter part of the eighteenth century. In a little work published in 1795, he says of him: 'He was certainly one of the greatest men that ever adorned this country. His mind was the most capacious, his reason the most athletic, his judgment the most balanced, his erudition the most profound. His nature was too dignified to deceive others, his intellect too piercing to be deceived himself. . . . The impartial judgment of subsequent ages will consider him as unrivalled in his own country, and had it been his fortune to have moved upon a theatre as capacious as his own mind, his celebrity would not have been exceeded by any man's in any other.'—Parsons' *Observations on the Bequest of Henry Flood*, pp. 65, 75. This agrees with the judgment of another very able man, Peter Burrowes, who was an intimate friend both of Flood and of Grattan. Burrowes described the former as 'perhaps the ablest man Ireland ever produced, indisputably the ablest man of his own times.'—*Memoir and Speeches of Peter Burrowes*, p. 11.

the State. 'In Ireland the powers were nearly equal, and therefore what in France and England was persecution, in Ireland was policy.' Considering how formidable the Irish Catholics were from their numbers, and from their connection with France and with the Stuarts, it would have been impossible to have preserved the settlement of the Revolution, and to have secured Ireland from a renewed civil war, if the Catholics had not been proscribed and reduced to impotence. No one could justify all parts of the penal code, but in as far as it was a code of political incapacities—and the greater part of it was directly or indirectly intended for that end—it was unavoidable.

It was plain, however, that the time had come for its final abolition. 'To give some participation of franchise to the Roman Catholics is no longer a matter of choice, but of the most urgent and irresistible policy.' The great question, however, was on what terms that franchise should be given. Parsons strongly maintained that the elective franchise should be given to no Catholic who had not a freehold of twenty pounds a year, and that it should be accompanied by the admission of the Catholics into Parliament. Anticipating very closely the judgment which was expressed many years later by Sir Robert Peel,[1] he pronounced it to be an act of infatuation, approaching to madness, to confer the franchise on almost the whole pauper tenantry of Ireland by annexing it to every forty-shilling freehold. 'In England,' he said, 'the lands are mostly let from year to year, or for seven years, or sometimes fourteen years, or sometimes and more rarely for twenty-one years, but leases for lives are seldom granted. Consequently the rabble of the people there cannot obtain freehold property—nay, a great majority of the middle classes cannot ob-

[1] See Peel's *Memoirs*, i. 4.

tain it. I have heard it stated by a very accurate and well-informed man that the number of county electors in England was but 100,000. . . . Here the tenures are quite different; almost all the lands of the country are let for lives, so that almost every peasant has a freehold tenure, and, if not disqualified by religion, a vote. See then the effect of this upon the present question. All the Catholic peasantry will be admitted to vote.'

The recent great increase of tillage immensely aggravated the danger. 'Those large farms which a few years ago were all in pasture grounds, each occupied by a single Protestant farmer, are now broken into several parcels, tenanted for the most part by Catholic husbandmen, so that seven or eight Catholics hold the ground at present which one Protestant held formerly. Will not most of these be voters? Consider this also. Land has risen within five or six years one-fourth in its value. Land which six years ago you could not let for more than twenty shillings an acre you can now let for twenty-five shillings an acre. What follows? The Catholic who had his land but six years ago for the extremity of its value, has it now for one-fourth less than its value; therefore he must hold a very small quantity who has not a profit to qualify him to vote. . . . Consider further that this increase of tillage and rise of land have principally been since Catholics were allowed to take freehold leases, and then consider how three provinces of this kingdom are covered with Catholics; and can you doubt of the multitude of Catholic voters, should you extend to them the forty-shilling franchise?' In three provinces out of four the Catholics are believed to be six times as numerous as the Protestants. Making then the amplest deduction on account of Catholic poverty and Protestant landlords, of pride and prejudice and every other motive that can be assigned, it is certain that the immense majority of county voters in at least

three provinces will be the most ignorant Catholics. Landlords themselves, wishing to increase their own consequence, will be certain almost everywhere to convert leases for years into leases for lives, and thus the Catholic preponderance will be immense and overwhelming.

'If they had all been Protestants for fifty generations back, I would not consent to the overwhelming of the Constitution by such a torrent. In some counties where there are but 2,000 electors now, you will, if this Bill passes, have 10,000; in others 20,000; in others 30,000; and I am well informed in the county of Cork alone you will have 50,000; that is, half of what I have stated the whole elective body to be of all the counties in England.'

'Do you think,' he asked, 'you will meliorate the Constitution by admitting into it such a copious adulteration of rabble as this? I do not now desire you to consider them as differing from you in religion, but merely their poverty, their numbers, their ignorance, their barbarous ignorance, many of them not being able even to speak our language, and then think whether giving them the franchise will not be a most pernicious vitiation of the Constitution. The county representation is now reckoned the sound part of the Constitution; but where will be its soundness with such a constituency?'

It is not possible, however, to consider the question putting religion aside. 'By granting franchise to the inferior Catholics, you give it to a body of men in great poverty, in great ignorance, bigoted to their sect and their altars, repelled by ancient prejudices from you, and at least four times as numerous as you are. You give them all at once the elective franchise, by which they will in nearly every county in three provinces out of four, be the majority of electors, controlling you,

overwhelming you, resisting and irresistible. I cannot conceive a frenzy much greater than this. Allow them every virtue that elevates man—still this is a trial that no body of men that are, or ever were, should be put to. I think as well of the Catholics as I do of any body of men in this country, but still I would not trust so much to any body of men in such circumstances; not to the Protestants to whom I belong; not to the Dissenters whom I highly respect. I can only consider the Catholics as men, and they must be more than men if, in such a situation, they could be safely entrusted with such a power.'

It was replied that the landlords are in Ireland omnipotent with the small tenants, and that they will continue, as at present, to return the county representatives. If this be so, it is not easy to see what good the extension of the franchise will do to the Catholics; but is it certain, is it probable, that this state of things will continue? 'Suppose you gave the inferior Catholics franchise, and that they should meet in all their parishes to determine on the exercise of it, as they lately did to determine on the attainment of it; and that they should nominate in their chapels their representatives in Parliament as they lately did their delegates to the Convention; what would there be to stop them? The power of their landlords might do much, but the power of religion might do much more. How much might these people be wrought upon by their priests at their altars, working upon their superstition and poverty! How easily might they be persuaded that their temporal as well as their eternal felicity depended upon their uniting together in the exercise of their franchise! I do not say that all this would follow, but I say that all this and more might follow, and therefore that we should not wantonly risk it.'

Suppose, however, that the parliamentary reform

which public opinion so urgently demands is obtained. It would almost certainly take the form of throwing by far the greatest part of the borough representation into the counties, collectively or divisionally. The small Catholic voters would thus inevitably command almost the entire representation in three provinces, and probably in some counties of the fourth. What use under such circumstances would be the exclusion of Catholics from Parliament? 'Do you think they could long want candidates even among Protestants, or nominal Protestants, fit for their purpose? Could they not easily get in every county enough of candidates who would offer to take their tests and promise to obey them, and the first object of their mission to Parliament would be to repeal those oaths which you now take at that table, and admit the Catholics to sit here indiscriminately? Such would be the representatives of three provinces out of four in the next Parliament. What then would be the representatives in the Parliament the next after? Would they have even the name or semblance of Protestants?' What chance would a Catholic candidate have before a constituency which was wholly or by a great majority Protestant? Assuming only that the most ignorant and bigoted Catholics in Ireland are not less under the influence of religious prejudice than the Protestants, it will follow that in a very short time the great majority in the House of Commons would be Catholic. 'Is there anything unreasonable in this supposition?'

Those who regard a Catholic revolt against Protestant proprietors as impossible or improbable, forget how easily it might be accomplished, and what overwhelming inducements, after the Government measure, designing men would have to produce it. Under our Constitution, the majority in the House of Commons controls all the powers of the State. All the wealth, all

the greatness of the land, is at its mercy. Intriguing and ambitious men had only to make the Catholic voters conscious of their power, and to persuade them to choose their representatives for Parliament in their chapels, as they had already chosen their representatives for the Convention, and the work would be done, and the power of the landlords annihilated. Topics of agitation will never be wanting. 'They may talk to them of tithes and even of rents, and at last proceed to talk to them of religion, and tell them: "If you will unite in your suffrage, your ancient religion, which has been prostrated in the dust for a century, and humiliated and reviled, may once more raise its head and appear in all its pristine magnificence." . . . Will you transfer such a power to men who are subject to such an influence? Will you be your own executioners and commit this desperate suicide?'

It was said that any special limitation imposed on Catholic voters would rob the measure of its grace, but was this so certain? Most Catholics of substance and intelligence, most of those who take any real interest in politics, are quite as well aware as the Protestants that the small tenantry of Ireland are unfit for political power, and they would welcome any clause that excluded them. 'I seldom knew a Protestant ten-pound freeholder who did not wish that Protestant forty-shilling freeholders should not vote, and for the same reason I am persuaded the middle Catholics will be better pleased that the inferior ones should not have votes.' 'Every information I have been able to procure from those counties where they most abound, confirms me in this sentiment.' The Catholic franchise ought, therefore, to be confined to the upper class and to the large farmers, an intelligent and respectable body, sufficiently numerous to become a considerable political influence in Irish life, but too few to be any serious danger to the Pro-

testants. But at the same time, the seats in Parliament ought most certainly to be thrown open to Catholics. Such a measure would be in the highest degree gratifying to the upper order among them. It would strike the Catholic imagination, and be far more really popular than the enfranchisement of an ignorant tenantry, and it would be completely without danger as long as the main part of the constituency continues Protestant. 'I should not be sorry to see a respectable Catholic sitting here on my right hand and another on my left, provided that by keeping the strength of the constituency Protestant, we did not endanger ourselves by the admission of too many of them. A Catholic House of Commons will never spring out of a Protestant root. But if the root be Catholic, no man can be sure how long the stem and branches will continue Protestant.'

The Government were alarmed at the levelling principles advocated in the North, and at the proposed alliance between Catholics and Dissenters; and they imagined that they would conciliate the former and prevent the alliance, by creating a democratic Catholic franchise. No calculation could be more infatuated. The Chief Secretary had been unable to adduce a single declaration to that effect from any Catholic leader, and if he had been able to adduce such a declaration it would be worthless. By the irresistible force of circumstances, by the stress of the most obvious and incontestable interest, the Catholics when they obtained the forty-shilling franchise would sooner or later be joined with the Dissenters in advocating a Reform Bill as levelling and democratic as possible. They probably did not possess more than a fiftieth part of the property of the kingdom, but if the borough constituencies were thrown into the counties, they would with their new franchise nominate three-quarters of the members of the House of Commons. 'This extensive franchise, there-

fore, instead of making the Catholics contented, and preventing them from uniting with the Dissenters, is the very measure which will make it the interest of the Catholics to press for a reform, and how few here do not know how interest overrules the actions of men!'

'In short, there never was a measure pretending to be a great one more narrowly conceived than the present Bill. It courts the Catholic rabble and insults the Catholic gentry. It gives power to those who are ignorant, and therefore dangerous, and withholds it from those who are enlightened, and therefore safe. It gives equal power with the Protestants to the lower class of Catholics, who are the most numerous, and thereby gives them a superiority, and it does not give equal powers to the upper class, who are less numerous than you, and who could therefore have had no superiority; that is, it does the very reverse of what it ought to do.'

Turning to another aspect of the subject, Parsons contended that it was quite clear there were two questions to be settled—a Protestant question, which was reform, and a Catholic question, which was emancipation—and that unless both questions were settled on a wise and moderate basis, Ireland never could be at peace. There was great reason, he said, to believe that the Government were pursuing a plan of dividing the different sections of the Irish people, and that their object in carrying the Catholic question was to obtain the means of maintaining the present system of parliamentary influence intact. Such a policy was sure to lead to a long train of calamities, and it was of the first importance to the future welfare of Ireland that it should be defeated. He proposed, therefore, that the Catholic franchise should be taken out of the present Bill and made part of a measure of parliamentary reform, to which it properly belonged, and that the other conces-

sions should be carried at once. This would no doubt adjourn the settlement of the Catholic franchise to the next year, but this postponement would be of no real consequence, for no general election was imminent, and it would have the great advantage of securing the simultaneous triumph of both questions. 'Should a minister say, Let us divide the people of Ireland, let us gratify a part and disappoint a part, by uniting the measures you defeat this ruinous policy. You force him either to reject all, which he dare not, or to admit all, and thus all parties succeed. You join the reform with a measure already recommended from the Throne. . . . You conciliate the minds of many Protestants to the Catholic franchise by thus embodying it with an act in favour of their own freedom, and you at once excite the whole people of Ireland from its shores to its centre in a universal demand for this great charter of public liberty. I would therefore begin by giving but a limited franchise to the Catholics, and by making but a moderate reform, and I would unite these measures. A sudden communication of power to a great body of people is never wise. Changes in an ancient Constitution ought to be gradual.'

He very earnestly protests that he is actuated by no spirit of hostility to the Catholics, and by no wish to defeat their aspirations for the franchise. 'Whatever I think can be safely granted to the Catholics, I will grant. Whatever I think cannot, I will endeavour to withhold, and I will say so. . . . Every respectable and candid man among them, at least when the fever of the present instant is past, will respect me for speaking my sentiments boldly.' It would not be wise and it would not be honourable for the Catholics 'neglecting their Protestant and Dissenting auxiliaries to insist in this critical juncture on a separate treaty for themselves,' and it certainly would not be wise in a Protestant Parliament

to support such a policy. 'The reason I would combine these two measures is not to defeat Catholic franchise but to secure parliamentary reform.' The House of Commons may pass a Reform Bill, but if it be disliked by the Government and supported only by a small section of the Irish people it will perish in the House of Lords or before the Throne. Nothing can secure its triumph but the irresistible force of a nation's will. 'The heart of the Catholics is now in the franchise, I would therefore put it into the body of the reform.' 'Unite the nation by uniting these measures, and proceed boldly and fearlessly like men, in the great cause of a great and united people. . . . Neglect no human means of strengthening the reform. Move it discreetly but rapidly forward. Put Catholic franchise into its bosom, and let it move on to the Lords and to the Throne followed by the votive acclamations of the whole people.'[1]

These extracts are very long, but they will not, I hope, prove uninteresting or uninstructive to my readers, and they are an excellent specimen of the debates of an assembly which has been greatly underrated and misrepresented. If the question had been decided by reason alone, the policy of Parsons appears to me to have been that which was most likely to have solved the great difficulty of making the Irish Government, without a convulsion, really constitutional. The restricted suffrage had been fully acquiesced in by the Catholic leaders in 1792, and if the Government thought it right to enlarge the scheme which had been rejected in that year, their wisest course would probably have been to reintroduce the former measure with an additional clause admitting Catholics to Parliament. Of the motives which induced them to adopt a different plan, it is not possible to speak

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 203–219.

with complete certainty, but there is one consideration, at least, which will not escape the reader. Parsons desired to carry both Catholic enfranchisement and reform. The Government were anxious above all things to avert the latter. Secondary measures of reform, indeed, they were now prepared to admit as unavoidable, but they made it their capital object to maintain the keystone of the existing parliamentary system, the preponderance of nomination boroughs which placed the control of the House of Commons in a very few hands. At the outbreak of a great war and at a time when the events of France had produced a sudden and wholly unprecedented democratic spirit in the community, this policy was peculiarly difficult, and whatever might be the ultimate effects, the Catholic Bill was for a time very favourable to it. It was likely to sever the Catholics at least temporarily from the Dissenters. The forty-shilling freeholders, whatever they might hereafter become, were at present absolutely subservient to their landlords, and they continued to be so till the struggles of 1826 and 1828. Nor had they as yet the overwhelming numerical preponderance which might be inferred from the speech of Parsons, though by the increase of population, the division of tenancies, and the competition of landlords for political power, they speedily attained it. The ministers might reasonably hope that for a time they had baffled the reformers, divided their ranks, and surmounted a crisis of great and pressing difficulty. If their thoughts travelled further, they may have calculated that by making the county constituencies mainly Catholic, they would give the Protestants a new and powerful reason for supporting the borough system, would make an extended Reform Bill both difficult and dangerous, and would perhaps produce a social and political condition which might one day lead to a legislative union.

The question of Catholic franchise was a very difficult one, owing to the fact that the Protestants already possessed the forty-shilling freehold franchise. At a time when all political power was in the hands of a small section of the Irish people, and when Ireland was especially suffering from the evils of extreme monopoly, a democratic Protestant suffrage in the counties was not altogether incapable of defence. It corresponded in some measure to the democratic scot and lot franchise, which existed in some of the English towns before the Reform Bill of 1832. But on the whole it was quite clear that the great mass of the forty-shilling freeholders out of Ulster were utterly unfit for political power; and in a country where the difficulties of government were unusually great, it would be a grave calamity if this class of men became the source or foundation of all political power. In several speeches made during the debates this danger was clearly recognised, and by no one more clearly than by Forbes, who was one of the ablest and most consistent of the reformers. Forbes maintained, however, that the evil of withholding the franchise from the Catholic forty-shilling freeholder, while it was conceded to his Protestant neighbour, would be still greater; that it would prevent the political union and amalgamation of creeds, which was the first object of the measure; that it would embody the excluded Catholics for the purpose of destroying the limitation, and that 'nothing was so dangerous in a State as an unequal distribution of constitutional privileges.'[1]

There was, it is true, another alternative, which was suggested by Hely Hutchinson, who said that, 'to prevent the influx of small freeholders and any disparity between Protestants and Catholics, he would wish that ten-pound freeholds were made indispensable to voters

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii 258 268.

of all persuasions.' A clause to this effect was actually proposed by Graydon, but withdrawn at the joint request of Hobart and Grattan.[1] It was indeed plainly impracticable. A period in which the democratic and levelling spirit ran so high was not one in which a great measure of disfranchisement could be safely carried. The policy of uniting the Protestants and Catholics would certainly not succeed, if the admission of Catholics to the Constitution was purchased by the disfranchisement of the majority of Protestant voters, and a large part of the Protestant forty-shilling freeholders in the North were not mainly employed in agriculture, and were eminently fitted for the franchise. 'Gentlemen talk of prohibiting forty-shilling freeholders from voting,' said Foster; 'they will not attempt so wild a project when they consider it. What! to disfranchise nearly two-thirds of all the Protestants! to disfranchise those persons who sent them into this House! The law in their favour had existed since Henry VI., and now forms a principle of the Constitution. Did the gentlemen who lived in the North recollect that this would disfranchise all their manufacturers? . . . Did they wish to force manufacturers to look for ten-pound freeholds? They would be spoiled as manufacturers, and would be miserable farmers. The weaver, with his little piece of land and his garden, is generally a forty-shilling freeholder; he is a useful member, a good voter, and a good subject, and on such men as him may the safety of the Constitution often depend.'[2]

These arguments were very powerful, and the Government scheme of extending the franchise to Catholic forty-shilling freeholders, and at the same time excluding Catholics from Parliament, was carried in its integrity. In one of his last speeches on the question, Hobart said

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 299, 300. [2] Ibid. xiii. 342.

that 'the principle of the Bill was not to admit Roman Catholics to the State,' but many who supported the Government must have agreed with Grattan that 'he must be a visionary politician who could imagine that, after what the Bill granted to the Catholics, they could long be kept out of the State,'[1] and at least one prominent member looked still further. 'I do not deprecate the day,' said Bushe, 'when we may grant the Catholics a full participation of power; but if we should do so, that measure should be accompanied by another—a satisfactory ecclesiastical establishment, paid out of the Treasury, and no such measure is now proposed. For it is idle to say we should have nothing left to contend for if we gave them seats in Parliament.'[2]

Few things in Irish parliamentary history are more remarkable than the facility with which this great measure was carried, though it was in all its aspects thoroughly debated. It passed its second reading in the House of Commons with only a single negative. It was committed with only three negatives, and in the critical divisions on its clauses the majorities were at least two to one. The qualification required to authorise a Catholic to bear arms was raised in committee on the motion of the Chancellor, and in addition to the oath of allegiance of 1774, a new oath was incorporated in the Bill, copied from one of the declarations of the Catholics, and abjuring certain tenets which had been ascribed to them, among others the assertion that the infallibility of the Pope was an article of their faith. For the rest the Bill became law almost exactly in the form in which it was originally designed. It swept away the few remaining disabilities relating to property which grew out of the penal code. It enabled Catholics to vote like Protestants for members of Parliament and magistrates

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 353. [2] Ibid. 318.

in cities or boroughs; to become elected members of all corporations except Trinity College; to keep arms subject to some specified conditions; to hold all civil and military offices in the kingdom from which they were not specifically excluded; to hold the medical professorships on the foundation of Sir Patrick Dun; to take degrees and hold offices in any mixed college connected with the University of Dublin that might hereafter be founded. It also threw open to them the degrees of the University, enabling the King to alter its statutes to that effect. A long clause enumerated the prizes which were still withheld. Catholics might not sit in either House of Parliament; they were excluded from almost all Government and judicial positions; they could not be Privy Councillors, King's Counsel, Fellows of Trinity College, sheriffs or subsheriffs, or generals of the staff.[1] Nearly every post of ambition was still reserved for Protestants, and the restrictions weighed most heavily on the Catholics who were most educated and most able.

In the House of Lords as in the House of Commons the Bill passed with little open opposition, but a protest, signed among other peers by Charlemont, was drawn up against it. Dickson, the Bishop of Down, and Law, the Bishop of Elphin, were conspicuous among the advocates of the measure, while Agar, the Archbishop of Cashel, spoke strongly against it. The most remarkable part, however, was that taken by Lord Fitzgibbon the Chancellor. As we have seen by the correspondence of the Government, he was from the beginning bitterly opposed to any concession to the Catholics, and he was not a man accustomed to veil or attenuate his sentiments. His natural and proper course would have been to resign his office when the policy which he had ad-

[1] 33 Geo. III. c. 21.

vocated as of vital importance was overthrown. He determined, however, to remain in office and to vote for the Catholic Bill, while he at the same time did the utmost in his power to deprive it of all its conciliatory effect. At the very opening of the session in which it was to be the supreme object of the Government to secure the loyalty and co-operation of the Catholics, he had, as we have seen, distinguished himself by a fierce attack upon their address to the King, and on March 13, when the Relief Bill had almost attained its last stage, he delivered his sentiments at length in a speech which was afterwards published, and which throws a singularly vivid light upon his opinions, his character, and his temper.

It was an able speech, but less able, I think, than the speeches of Parsons and Foster, and in its tone of thought and method of reasoning it corresponded closely with those which Duigenan, and Duigenan alone, was accustomed to make in the House of Commons. He began with a characteristically arrogant attack upon Bishop Law, who had spoken with much liberality in favour of the Catholics. He could not, he said, remain silent when 'the epidemical frenzy of the time' had reached even the right reverend bench. He could not leave 'unnoticed and unreprehended' the 'indiscretions' of the Bishop—indiscretions which could only be excused by a 'radical ignorance of the laws of the country from whence he has come, and of the history, the laws, and the Constitution of that country into which he has been transplanted.' For his own part he had not 'a spark of religious bigotry' in his composition, nor did he speak in opposition to the measure. 'I should be extremely sorry,' he said, 'if anything which may fall from me were to stop the progress of this Bill. I do believe after what has passed upon this subject in Great Britain and Ireland it may be essential to the momen-

tary peace of the country that your lordships should agree to it. I do not desire to be responsible for the consequences which might follow its rejection, much as I disapprove of its principle. . . . Whatever I say is intended only to open the eyes of the people . . . if possible, to stop the further progress of innovation.'

He lays it down as a broad principle that as long as the claims of the Pope to universal spiritual dominion are maintained, 'it is utterly impossible that any man who admits them can exercise the legislative powers of a Protestant State with temper and justice.' In discussing the political claims of Roman Catholics 'we ought only to look to the principles of that religion which they profess,' and 'the page of history does not furnish a single instance in which Protestants and Papists have agreed in exercising the political powers of the same State.' It follows then that the whole Catholic population of Ireland, by virtue of their religious belief, should be absolutely and for ever excluded from all share of political power. They are 'as jealously and superstitiously devoted to the Popish faith as the people of Spain, Portugal, or any of the most bigoted districts of the German Empire. . . . There is not a country in Europe in which the reformed religion has been established, where its progress has been so slow and inconsiderable as in Ireland. . . . There now is, and always has been, a constant correspondence and communication kept up between this country and the Court of Rome, and the spiritual power of the Pope is at this day acknowledged as implicitly as it ever was at any period of Irish history.'

He gives a summary and highly characteristic sketch of the past history of Ireland. Omitting altogether all the troubles that had preceded the Reformation, he compendiously dismisses every disturbance that had occurred since that period as exclusively due to 'the

religious bigotry' of Papists. The struggle of Tyrone against Elizabeth, the great rebellion which was produced in 1641 chiefly by the confiscations in Ulster, the conduct of the Irish at the Revolution in adhering to James II., who had given them no cause whatever for rejecting him—all these were due to 'religious bigotry.' On the penal laws he of course looks back with absolute and unqualified approval. They had, it is true, one disadvantage—one single disadvantage—they lowered the value of landed property in Ireland; but they were essential to the security of the titles of the owners. 'The people of this country consisted of two distinct and separate castes, the one with a short intermission in possession of the whole property and power of the country, the other expelled from both in consequence of unremitted and inveterate rebellion and resistance to English Government and English connection; the one acknowledging the powers civil and ecclesiastical entrusted to the Crown by the Constitution, the other obstinately disclaiming all ecclesiastical obedience to their lawful Sovereign, and acknowledging an unlimited ecclesiastical jurisdiction and authority in a foreign prince.' The Protestants were 'an English colony settled in an enemies' country,' 'the natives of the country had contracted a rooted and incurable aversion to them.' The obvious policy, the vital interest of 'that body of people in whom the power and property of the nation had centred,' was to remain strictly united among themselves and closely connected with England, and to guard jealously every avenue of political power from encroachments by Papists.

For a long time this policy had been successfully pursued, and to the 'old Popery laws which disabled the native Irish from embarrassing British Government or renewing hostility against the British settlers,' Ireland stands indebted in a great measure for her internal

tranquillity during the last century. The root of all our present troubles lay in 'the fatal infatuation' of 1782. Not until Irish patriots began to put forward claims of legislative independence as against England, and to divide the Protestants of Ireland, was any claim to political power advanced by the Irish Papists. But since that time the Popish pretensions had grown apace. The most respectable members of the religion had been thrown aside, and a Popish National Assembly, imitated from that of France, had been convened in the metropolis, and it is now exercising 'a complete system of democratic government over all the Catholics of Ireland.' The Bill now upon the table,' he continued, 'has been backed by authority, and is now by authority presented to us as a demand of right, by a great majority of the people . . . to be admitted to a full participation of the political powers of the State. . . . If the principle is once yielded, in my opinion it goes directly to the subversion of all civilised government. . . . If Papists have a right to vote for representatives in a Protestant Parliament, they have a right to sit in Parliament—they have a right to fill every office of the State—they have a right to pay tithes exclusively to their own clergy—they have a right to restore the ancient pomp and splendour of their religion—they have a right to be governed exclusively by the laws of their own Church—they have a right to seat their bishops in this House—they have a right to seat a Popish prince on the throne—they have a right to subvert the established Government and to make this a Popish country, which I have little doubt is their ultimate object, and therefore, if I were to look only to the manner in which this Bill has been brought forward, in my judgment we are about to establish a fatal precedent in assenting to it.'

Can it then be justified on the ground of policy?

On this point he entered into a long disquisition, which I shall spare my readers, upon the nature of the Papal authority, the decrees of the Lateran Council and the Council of Constance about heretics, the claims of the Church to exercise jurisdiction over the marriages of its members, the canonical obedience which every ecclesiastic in Ireland owes to the Pope, and he concluded that it was idle to expect that Papists could ever be cordially attached to any Government that was not connected with the Popish religion. The measure, too, was advocated as one step towards breaking down the existing system of parliamentary government in Ireland 'by opening the right of representation to the mass of the people of all descriptions and of all religions, and one great objection to the Bill on the table is that it recognises in a great measure this most pernicious principle.' It is a principle which must necessarily lead either to simple anarchy or to a purely democratic Government. 'The advocates for an independent House of Commons have two striking examples before them. In the last century England was blest with an independent House of Commons, a great majority of them professed reformers and patriots by trade. What was the consequence? They murdered their King, they subverted the Church, they annihilated the peerage, and under the specious name of a republic erected a tyranny the most intolerable that ever oppressed a people who had been free. France is now blessed with an independent Representative Assembly, all of them professed reformers and patriots by trade, and . . . they have reduced that once great and flourishing kingdom to a state of frantic and savage despotism, unexampled in the annals of the civilised world.'

In Ireland any attempt to throw open the Parliament would be at least as fatal, and England can never consent to it. 'Great Britain must maintain her connec-

tion with Ireland, and she can maintain it only by maintaining and supporting the old English interest here. She must look for support in Ireland by maintaining and defending the descendants of the old English settlers, who, with a very few exceptions, constitute the Protestant interest in this country; and they must know and feel that they can maintain their present situation only by a close adherence to Great Britain. . . . The descendants of the old Irish, who constitute the Catholic interest of Ireland, know and feel that they can never recover the situation which their ancestors held in Ireland but by separation from Great Britain, and therefore if any man in Great Britain or Ireland is so wild as to hope that, by communicating political power also to the Catholics of Ireland, they are to be conciliated to British interests, he will find himself bitterly mistaken. Great Britain can never conciliate the descendants of the old Irish to her interests upon any other terms than by restoring to them the possessions and the religion of their ancestors in its full splendour and dominion. Either is impracticable; for I consider a repeal of the Act of Supremacy in any of the hereditary dominions of the Crown of Great Britain, to be as much beyond the power of Parliament, as a repeal of the Great Charter or a repeal of the Bill of Rights.'

The fever of democracy is now spreading far and wide. 'The Puritans of the North, availing themselves of the example of their Catholic brethren, have already formed a provincial convention, and intend to form a general national convention . . . in order to force a dissolution of the House of Commons as now constituted, and to form a pure democratic representation of the people without distinction. . . . Public and private credit has been blasted; trade and agriculture are at a stand; a general despondency and alarm pervade the country, and in my mind there never was a period at

which there existed more serious cause for alarm.' 'The people appear to have been seized with a general infatuation,' and all the signs which Lord Clarendon described as foreshadowing in England the convulsions of 1641 may be abundantly descried. If they are not checked, 'we shall be driven to sue for a Union with the Parliament of England, as the last resource for the preservation of Ireland, and the misery is that every step which we advance in innovation, as it increases the necessity for a Union, will increase the difficulties in adjusting it.'

The reader will probably wonder how an orator who spoke in such a strain could bring himself to vote in favour of the Bill. His peroration, however, describes his position with clearness, frankness, and eloquence. 'I must again,' he said, 'declare that I consider the Bill to be a most indiscreet and precipitate experiment. I consider it to be in principle unwise and pernicious, and even if it were unexceptionable in principle, when I look back to the manner in which it has been brought before Parliament, in my opinion by assenting to it we shall establish a precedent fatal to all legitimate authority. But however deeply these considerations are impressed upon my mind, I will not divide the House upon the question of committing this Bill, because after what has passed upon the subject in Great Britain and Ireland, I will not *now* be responsible for the immediate consequences of rejecting altogether the wild claims which have been advanced in behalf of the Irish Roman Catholics. If the measure which has been brought forward shall prove successful in uniting men of all religious persuasions in sentiment, in support of the Constitution, it is fit that its authors and promoters should have the full and exclusive merit resulting from it. If on the contrary it shall prove a source of new difficulties and embarrassments in the government of this country, it is

fit that they, and they only, should be responsible for the issue.'

It is easy to conceive what must have been the effect upon the Catholic population of Ireland of such a speech, made at such a moment, by one of the most powerful and trusted members of the Government of Ireland. It is not less easy to understand how inevitably a policy of conciliation was doomed to failure, while a statesman of such a temper and of such opinions remained at the helm. In the House of Commons the position of Fitzgibbon, though always considerable, had been a secondary one. He had been overshadowed by the superior eloquence of Flood and Grattan, and among the other speakers there appear to have been several who were considered not inferior to him in ability, and who had greater weight both with the House and with the country. In the House of Lords, however, and in the Privy Council, he appears to have attained an influence which was little less than despotic. He was by far the ablest Irishman who had adopted, without restriction, the doctrine that the Irish Legislature must be maintained in a condition of permanent and unvarying subjection to the English Executive, and in order to secure that end, there was no measure, either of force or of corruption, from which he would recoil. He was thoroughly trusted by the Lord Lieutenant, and he was the favourite spokesman of powerful family interests connected with the Government, and especially of the Beresfords, who had gradually acquired so many posts of emolument and influence that they exercised an authority almost rivalling that of Lord Shannon in the former generation. The position of Fitzgibbon was therefore a very strong one. If he continued to be Chancellor, though violently disapproving on a capital question of the policy of the Government, this seemed less anomalous in Ireland than England, and even in England Camden had lately given

an example, though a less flagrant one, of the same kind.

The extraordinary arrogance and violence which he habitually displayed was noticed by almost everyone who drew his character—even by the Archbishop who in a strain of the highest eulogy preached his funeral sermon. In speaking of his Catholic countrymen, his tone was utterly unlike that of Flood, Charlemont, and Foster, who were equally opposed to Catholic emancipation, and it was peculiarly ungracious in the son of one of the 'convert' or conforming lawyers. The elder Fitzgibbon had been an able and successful man. He was related to Edmund Burke, who has spoken with much respect of his 'firm and manly character;'[1] but who looked with dismay and disgust upon the career of his more eminent son. 'I confess I tremble for the conduct of the Chancellor,' he wrote to Grattan, 'who seems, for a long time past, desirous of putting himself at the head of whatever discontents may arise from concessions to the Catholics, when things are on the very edge of a precipice or, indeed, between two precipices; he appears resolved that they shall be tumbled headlong down one of them.'[2] 'A Papist,' it was very happily remarked, 'can reason as well as a Protestant, and he can argue with infallible conclusion that if he is, of necessity, dangerous to a Protestant Government, a Protestant Government can by no possibility be salutary to him.'[3] Grattan never appears to have estimated Fitzgibbon very highly, and he considered Foster the ablest opponent of the Catholics, but he clearly recognised the dangerous tendency of the speech I have quoted, in 'diminishing the reconciliatory effect' of the Relief Act, and 'informing the Catholics that though the Irish

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 436.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 114.

[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 73.

law ceased to be their enemy, the Irish Minister continued to be so.'[1] The justice of this criticism is self-evident, but Westmorland, whose own opinions approximated greatly to those of Fitzgibbon, looked upon him with unabated confidence, and wrote of him in terms of the warmest eulogy to England.[2]

The Relief Bill, with all its drawbacks, was a measure of the very highest importance, and it was impossible to mistake the satisfaction which it gave in the country. Just before it had passed its first stage in the committee, Hobart wrote to England that the prospect was already brightening. 'The declarations of the Catholics which we receive from all quarters of their gratitude to Government for the Bill now in its progress had so far operated as to raise bank stock 10 per cent. in the course of last week.'[3] The North was, however, still full of sedition, and before the Catholic Bill had passed, the great French war had begun. An Alien Bill guarding against the danger of foreign emissaries, a severe Bill preventing the importation, removal, or possession of arms or ammunition without licence, an augmentation of the military establishment from 15,000 to 20,000 men, and a Bill directing the enrolment for the space of four years of a militia force of 16,000 men, raised, according to the English model, by conscription, passed speedily, and with little discussion.[4] The movement for forming volunteer corps modelled after those

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 126.

[2] 'I cannot do full justice to his conduct during the present session. Thinking what was proposed injurious to the English connection in the first instance, he acquiesced in the wishes of the Government, discountenanced the innumerable cabals that were at work, encouraged the timorous, and to his spirit and decision may in great degree be attributed the successful stand we have made.' Westmorland to Nepean, March 21, 1793.

[3] Hobart to Nepean, March 13, 1793.

[4] 33 George III. c. 1, 2, 16, 22.

of France, and pervaded by a strong republican spirit, was successfully met. The proclamation against the National Guard in Dublin was extended to all volunteer meetings in Dublin, and afterwards in other parts of the kingdom, and the nightly drills, the collection of arms, the adoption of seditious emblems, which for a time seriously disquieted the Government, gradually ceased. The success of these measures Westmorland attributed largely to the cordial support of Parliament and the unanimity with which all parties in it reprobated 'levelling and French principles.'[1] From the Militia Act great things were expected. 'I look upon the militia,' wrote the Chief Secretary, 'as the most useful measure both to England and Ireland that ever has been adopted, and if I am not extremely mistaken, it will operate effectually to the suppression of volunteering, to the civilisation of the people, and to the extinction of the means which the agitators of the country have repeatedly availed themselves of to disturb the peace. . . . I am happy to add that there is every appearance of the restoration of peace in Ireland.'[2]

The Catholic Relief Bill received the royal assent in April 1793, and in the same month the Catholic Convention dissolved itself. Before doing so it passed a resolution recommending the Catholics 'to co-operate in all loyal and constitutional means' to obtain parliamentary reform. It at the same time voted 2,000*l.* for a statue of the King, 1,500*l.* and a gold medal to Wolfe Tone, 500*l.* to Simon Butler for his 'Digest of the Popery Laws,' and a plate of the value of 100 guineas to each of the five gentlemen who had gone to England to present the Catholic petition to the King.[3] The

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, March 29, 1793.

[2] Hobart to Nepean, March 19, 1793.

[3] Compare a memorandum sent from Ireland by the Government,

Catholic prelates in their pastorals expressed their gratitude for the Relief Bill. The United Irishmen on their side issued a proclamation warmly congratulating the Catholics on the measure for their relief, but also urging in passionate strains that parliamentary reform was the first of needs.[1] It was noticed at this time, that a large proportion of the borough owners were now convinced that a serious reform in Parliament was indispensable, and were quite ready to concur in it. It was admitted by the most advanced reformers, that nomination boroughs must be treated as private property, and that compensation money should be granted to the patrons,[2] but subject to this compensation it seems probable that with Government support a Reform Bill might have been carried without much difficulty. At first the language of the Chief Secretary on the subject showed some apprehension, but he soon found that no considerable popular movement for reform was for the present to be feared. The Catholic Bill had satisfied many and alarmed some, and the revolutionary movement in the North made one class of mind recoil from all change as dangerous, and another class of mind despise all moderate and legal change as inadequate. Addresses in favour of reform came in from the City of Dublin, and from some of the northern counties, but the Catholics notwithstanding the resolution of their Convention were quiescent, and the constitutional movement

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April 25, 1793; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 59; Wolfe Tone, i. 252–267.

[1] June 7, 1783.

[2] Thus the United Irishmen, in advocating their Reform Bill in 1793, wrote: 'We believe it will be said that our plan, however just, is impracticable in the present state of the country. If any part of that impracticability should be supposed to result from the interested resistance of borough proprietors, although we never will consent to compromise the public right, yet we for our parts might not hesitate to purchase the public peace by an adequate compensation.'—Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 238.

in the North had perceptibly abated.[1] Ponsonby, Conolly, and Grattan introduced the question into the House of Commons, but the Government carried without difficulty an evasive amendment asserting 'that under the present system of representation the privileges of the people, the trade, and the prosperity of the country have greatly increased, and that if any plan be produced likely to increase these advantages and not hazard what we already possess, it ought to be taken into the most serious consideration.'[2]

The prosperity, however, to which the Government so skilfully appealed was now for a time very seriously impaired. Continental troubles, internal disquietude, and acute commercial depression in England, had contributed to check it, at the very time when a great additional expenditure was required for the war. Up to the spring of 1792 the Chancellor of the Exchequer pronounced the wealth of the country to have been steadily increasing, but after this date trade began to languish, and the revenue rapidly declined. In a single half-year it was said to have fallen by no less than 87,000*l.* The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that 750,000*l.* must be speedily added to the ordinary income, and much more was certain to follow.[3] The suffering among large classes of workmen was very great, and political agitators were manifestly trading on it. The warehouses were overstocked with cotton goods which could not be sent abroad, and failures rapidly multiplied. The streets were filled with workmen who could not find employment. The worsted weavers of Dublin stated in a petition to Parliament, that in two months the value of woollen yarn had fallen twenty per cent., and that of the 2,000 looms which in 1789 were employed in Dublin

[1] See Plowden, ii. 431–433; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 308–310.

[2] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 164.

[3] Ibid. 84, 418–420, 424, 433.

and its neighbourhood, there were not now 500.[1] The distress was so great that an Act was passed authorising the Bank of Ireland to advance 200,000*l.* for the support of commercial credit.[2]

The Government had for some time perceived that in order to combat successfully the levelling spirit, and avoid a measure of reform which might seriously diminish the power of the Crown, it was necessary to acquire some 'popular basis' by accepting the chief measures of the Whig Club, and the necessity for retrenchment strengthened their conviction.[3] A series of measures were accordingly now carried on the proposal of the Government which went far to meet the demands of the more moderate reformers. In the first place, the pension list was to be gradually reduced to 80,000*l.* a year, which was not hereafter to be exceeded, and no single pension amounting to more than 1,200*l.* a year was to be granted except to members of the Royal Family, or on an address of either House of Parliament. It was computed that in this manner a saving amounting to 30,000*l.* a year would be ultimately effected. The King at the same time surrendered his ancient power over the hereditary revenue, and a fixed civil list, which was not to exceed 145,000*l.*, exclusive of the pension list, was granted to him. It was part of the arrangement that an Irish board of treasury was to be created, wholly responsible to the Irish Parliament, and this necessarily involved some considerable expense, especially as two vice-treasurers living in England had to be compensated for the loss of their offices; but it was hoped that the enormous expense of the collection of the Irish revenue

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 449.

[2] 33 Geo. III. c. 52.

[3] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 16; Hobart to Nepean, Jan. 16, 1793. See, too, a powerful letter written by Conolly to his connection, the Duke of Richmond, and intended for the perusal of the English Cabinet, March 23, 1793.

would be materially reduced, and by the abolition of the old hereditary revenue the finances of the country were for the first time brought completely under the control of Parliament.[1] This measure was very important, as assimilating the Irish Constitution to that of England, though the great growth of the national expenditure and the heavy burdens which Parliament had contrived from time to time to throw upon the hereditary revenue, had long since put an end to the fear that the King, by means of that revenue, might be able permanently to dispense with a Parliament in Ireland.[2]

In addition to this great measure, the Government accepted with little modification the Bill which Forbes had repeatedly brought forward, for incapacitating most pensioners and some placemen from sitting in Parliament. No person who held any place of profit created after the passing of this Act, or who enjoyed a pension for years or during pleasure, might sit in the House of Commons. Several existing functionaries were excluded; members of Parliament, who accepted places of profit already in existence, were obliged to vacate their seats as in England, though they might be re-elected; the number of commissioners for the execution of offices

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[1] 33 Geo. III. c. 34; *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 431, 447, 448.

[2] The Secretary of State (H. Hutchinson) said: 'The nett hereditary revenue for the last year ending March 25, 1792, was 275,102*l.*, and the gross amount 764,627*l.*, which was reduced to so small a sum by charging the whole expense of the collection and management of the whole revenue on this part of it; but when this came to be considered no man could justify it. It arose at first from laying the additional duties on those subjects of taxation from which the hereditary revenue arose. It afterwards became a pious fraud to lay every possible charge on this fund, and with that view bounties and premiums to a very great annual amount were charged on it, which had reduced its amount.' *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 473. Some very valuable speeches on the history of the Irish Revenue were delivered in this discussion.

was limited, and every member of Parliament, before taking his seat, was obliged to swear that he did not hold, either directly or indirectly, any pension or office which incapacitated him from sitting.[1]

In this manner some of the great ends of the reforming party in Parliament were attained, and the experiment, whether the House of Commons could be seriously improved, and the democratic spirit in the country to any considerable degree satisfied, by secondary measures of reform, which left the overwhelming preponderance of nomination boroughs untouched, might be fairly tried. It must, however, be observed that one portion of this Act had effects which were certainly not anticipated by those independent members who had originally advocated it. In a Parliament which depended mainly on popular election, a law obliging members who accepted offices under the Crown to vacate their seats, and appeal to their constituents for re-election, was manifestly a guarantee of public liberty; but in a Parliament consisting mainly of nomination boroughs at the complete disposal of the ministers, its effects were very different. It gave the Government facilities for vacating seats, replacing members, and changing the composition of the House without a dissolution, which added materially to their power. No distinction was drawn between real offices and mere nominal offices, like the Chiltern Hundreds in England, and there were four such offices in Ireland, with salaries of thirty shillings attached to them. In 1789, when Forbes first brought forward a measure substantially the same as the Act of 1793, Buckingham clearly perceived the advantages he might derive from it, and although it limited the pension list to 80,000*l.* a year,

[1] 33 Geo. III. c. 41. According to the *Anthologia Hibernica* (ii. 237) eleven pensioners and five placemen in the existing House of Commons, were for the future excluded by the Act.

he argued that it would still be probably for the advantage of the Government to accept it.[1] The Bill was accordingly in that year suffered to pass the Commons, but after some hesitation the Government resolved to throw it out in the Lords, on the ground that 'the violent and dangerous combination existing against Government [after the Regency contest] could only be ultimately destroyed by a considerable increase to the charge in the civil pension list,' and that there was at that time 'very little hope of uniting to a systematic support those whose seats depend on popular elections.'[2] Its enactment, however, in 1793, though it in some slight degree purified the House of Commons and held out a prospect of considerable future improvement, was no real sacrifice of Government influence, and the power it gave the ministers of changing the borough members without appealing to the popular constituencies by a dissolution, enabled them, seven years afterwards, to carry the legislative union.[3]

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[1] He writes: 'A principle is established by this Bill entirely novel in the statute book, though often attempted by different Governments: I mean the principle of vacating, by pension or otherwise, the seats of members of the House of Commons. I need not explain to your lordship the manifest advantage of such a power to be lodged in the Crown. It is well known that his Majesty's service has often suffered materially from the want of it, and the Opposition have always been particularly jealous on this subject; and I am inclined to believe that they would not have passed this clause had they clearly seen the operation of it.' 'The King's Government will be essentially strengthened by it.' Even the portion of the Bill limiting the civil pension list to 80,000*l.* a year (exclusive of pensions granted to the royal family or on parliamentary address) did not appear to Buckingham altogether objectionable, as it gave for the first time a full parliamentary recognition to the right of the Crown to grant, without any parliamentary control, pensions to that amount. Buckingham to Sydney (secret), Mar. 20, 1789.

[2] Ibid. (most secret) March 20, 1789.

[3] See the very just remarks of Barrington, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xxii.

It was evident indeed that, unless the borough system in Ireland was reformed, no great change in the character of the House could be expected. That system the ministry determined carefully to maintain, but the Catholic Relief Act operated to some extent as a measure of reform in the county constituencies. It was estimated by a contemporary that about thirty thousand new electors were at once created. Many smaller landlords, whose tenants were chiefly or exclusively Catholic, obtained a considerable accession of political power, and several counties, where the whole representation had been practically in the hands of two or three great families, were in this manner thrown open.[1]

Several other measures of great importance were carried in this remarkable session. A favourite object, for which Grattan had long laboured, was attained by the passing of the Barren Land Act, which encouraged the cultivation of the great tracts of barren land that still existed in Ireland, by exempting them for a period of seven years from the burden of tithes.[2] An Act, corresponding to Fox's Libel Act, provided that juries in libel cases might, in Ireland as in England, give their verdict upon the whole matter at issue, instead of being confined to the questions of publication and of meaning.[3] The hearth tax was rearranged, and while the taxes on the larger houses were increased, a suggestion which had been made by Grattan and Conolly, and which received the special approbation of Pitt,[4] was carried into effect, and all cottages which had only one hearth, and tenancies of a not greater value than five pounds a year, were wholly exempted.[5] The right of

[1] McKenna's *Political Essays relative to the Affairs of Ireland*, 1791–1793, pp. xiii. 200–203 [1794].

[2] 33 Geo. III. c. 25.

[3] Ibid. c. 43.

[4] Westmorland to Dundas, Jan. 16, 1793.

[5] 33 Geo. III. c. 14.

Ireland to participate in the East India trade was also now fully acknowledged, but the Irish Parliament agreed to recognise the monopoly of the East India Company, and when the charter of that Company was renewed for twenty years, provisions were made which substantially, though with some restrictions, removed the grievance of exclusion, of which Irish statesmen had hitherto complained. The East India Company undertook that a ship of 800 tons burden should sail annually from Cork to India for the purpose of carrying Irish goods.[1]

Grattan was very anxious at this time to go still further, and to place the whole commercial relations between England and Ireland on a basis of perfect reciprocity. This, as we have seen, had been the policy of Pitt in 1785, and Grattan again declared his full approval of that policy considered as a commercial arrangement, though he still justified his opposition to Orde's propositions as amended in England, on the ground that they contained provisions which were inconsistent with the constitutional independence of the Irish Parliament. It was extremely important, from a political as well as a commercial point of view, that a war of hostile tariffs, which does so much to sunder friendly nations and to generate political animosities, should not arise. In the North there was still some clamour for protecting duties against England, and there were several instances in which Irish goods were not admitted into Great Britain on the same terms as English goods into Ireland. England still maintained her woollen monopoly by imposing a prohibitory duty of 2*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.* per yard on one class of woollen goods imported from Ireland, and of 6*s.* per yard on another class, while the corresponding duties

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 451, 452, 488–514; 33 Geo. III. c. 31.

imposed on these goods when imported from England into Ireland were only $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ and $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per yard. Irish printed linens were subject in England to an import duty of sixty-five per cent., while the corresponding duty in Ireland was only ten per cent. Cotton goods paid an import duty in England of thirty per cent., in Ireland of only ten per cent.[1] Grattan contended that it was very important for both countries that all these inequalities should be abolished, and that the commercial arrangements between the two countries should be definitely and finally fixed.

The Irish Government rejected his proposal, on the ground of the lateness of the session and of the inexpediency of combining so large a question with the question of the East India trade; but it appears from their confidential correspondence that they considered it eminently wise, and that they would have had no difficulty in carrying it in Ireland. Hobart, after describing the success of the East India Bill, wrote to England: 'The conduct of the Irish Parliament upon this business, I hope, will prove to you that I was not much mistaken when I urged the expediency of treating Ireland with liberality, and for once conferring a favour without letting it appear to have been extorted. Mr. Pitt's plan for settling the commercial intercourse between the two countries is now, I believe, in all the most difficult points nearly accomplished. It would be a singular satisfaction to my mind, to be instrumental in effecting the remainder. . . . What remains is little more than to place Great Britain and Ireland on the same footing as Great Britain and France. Mr. Pitt is certainly apprised of the difficulties he would have to encounter in England. We should have very few here. The

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiv. 50.

principal objections would be likely to arise from the friends to protecting duties. Mr. Grattan, having stirred the question, must be answerable for that part of the unpopularity which might attend it, and we should have the credit and the popularity which might generally belong to the measure. . . . I am satisfied it is more practicable now than at any former period, and if the opportunity is lost it may fail for ever.'[1]

One other important measure carried in the session of 1793 remains to be noticed. The well-known Convention Act was levelled against the habit which had for some years prevailed in Ireland, of summoning great delegated or representative assemblies outside Parliament, which assumed to represent the people or some large section of them, and to speak in their name and with their authority. The Catholic Convention had been dissolved, but the United Irishmen proposed to convoke a national assembly at Athlone. All such assemblies were by the new Act pronounced unlawful, though the full right of subjects to petition for redress of grievances was acknowledged. The Bill took its rise in the House of Lords, where it was introduced by the Chancellor. In the Commons it was resisted by Grattan, who, however, spoke, in the opinion of the Government, in the 'most moderate manner,' and frankly admitted that such a convention as that proposed to be held at Athlone was, in the present state of Ireland, very dangerous and ought to be withstood. His objections to the Bill were that it extended beyond the necessity of the case, that it was a declaratory Bill and that the declaration of law which it contained was erroneous, and that it threw a retrospective censure on the Catholic Convention, the Volunteer Convention of Dungannon, and some other perfectly legal assemblies.

[1] Hobart to Nepean, July 17, 1793.

The Bill, however, was carried by large majorities, and it was only repealed in our own day.[1]

The session of 1793 extended to the middle of August, and was one of the longest as well as one of the most important ever known in Ireland. Whatever divisions there may have been on the great questions of internal policy, the Government at least could complain of no slackness or division in the support of Imperial policy, and the French party, which undoubtedly existed in the country, found no countenance or representative among the leaders of the Opposition.

Only a single discordant note on foreign politics was this session heard in Parliament, and it proceeded from a young man of thirty who had no political weight or ability, though the charm of his character and the deep tragedy of his early death have given him an enduring place in the hearts of his countrymen. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the younger brother of the Duke of Leinster, had, through the influence of his brother, been elected for the county of Kildare during his absence, and contrary to his wish, in 1790. His life had hitherto been purely military. When a very young man, he had served with distinction at the close of the American war, under Lord Rawdon, and was afterwards for some time quartered in British America. His artless and touching correspondence with his mother has been preserved, and it enables us to trace very clearly the outlines of his character. Warm-hearted, tender, pure-minded, and social to an unusual degree, he endeared himself to a wide circle, and his keen devotion to his profession gave promise of a distinguished military career, but he was not a man of serious or well-reasoned convictions, and he had all the

[1] 33 Geo. III. c. 29; *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 540–556; Hobart to Nepean, July 21, 26, 1793.

temperament of a sentimentalist and an enthusiast. To such men the new lights which had arisen in France were as fatally attractive as the candle to the moth. Already in Canada the philosophy of Rousseau had obtained an empire over his mind, and on his return to Europe he plunged wildly into revolutionary politics.

In the autumn of 1792 he was staying at Paris with Paine, and he took part in a banquet to celebrate the victory of the Republic over the invaders, at which toasts were drunk to the universal triumph of the principles of the Revolution and the abolition of all hereditary titles and feudal distinctions. Such a proceeding on the part of an English officer could hardly be passed over, and Lord Edward was summarily dismissed from the army. In Parliament he appears to have been a silent member till an address to the Lord Lieutenant was moved, thanking him for having suppressed the National Guard which had been enrolled in imitation of the French, and pledging the House to concur in all measures that were necessary for the suppression of sedition and disaffection. Fitzgerald starting from his seat vehemently expressed his disapprobation of the address, and pronounced the Lord Lieutenant and the majority of the House the worst subjects the King had. The House was cleared, and a scene of confusion followed which has not been reported. Lord Edward's explanation of his words was of such a nature that it was unanimously voted by the House 'unsatisfactory and insufficient.' On the following day some kind of apology was at last extorted, but it was so imperfect that a large minority voted against receiving it.[1] The incident would be hardly worth recording but for the subsequent career of Lord Edward, and it is also remarkable because he alone in the Irish Parliament

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xiii. 82, 83; Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald.*

represented sentiments which were spreading widely through the country.

Burke in his 'Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe,' which was published in 1792, has expressed his deliberate opinion that notwithstanding the grave difficulties of the time, the Irish Revolution of 1782 had hitherto produced no inconvenience either to England or Ireland; and he attributed this fact to the admirable temper with which it had in both kingdoms been conducted. The real meaning of the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century was that the government of the country was essentially in the hands of its Protestant landlords, qualified by the fact that the Executive possessed a sufficient number of nomination boroughs to exercise a constant controlling influence over their proceedings. It was a type of government that grew out of political ideas and out of a condition of society that have irrevocably passed, and these pages will furnish abundant evidence of the many forms of corruption and abuse that attended it. The belief, however, that the owners of landed property are the natural rulers of a country, the class by whom its government is likely to be most safely, most efficiently, and most justly carried on, was in the eighteenth century scarcely less prevalent in England than in Ireland, and even in America it was countenanced by no less acute and independent a writer than Franklin.[1] Nor can it, I think, be reasonably disputed that the Irish Parliament in the latter years of the century, though it had great defects, had also conspicuous merits. Though animated by a strong national spirit, it was thoroughly loyal to the English connection, prepared to make great sacrifices in defence of the Empire, and extremely anxious to work in harmony with the Legislature in England.

[1] See *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, iv. 141.

With two exceptions, of which the importance has been enormously exaggerated, it had hitherto done so. The prosperity of the country had undoubtedly increased under its rule. It contained many men who would have done honour to any Legislature. Its more important debates exhibited a singularly high level of knowledge and ability. Its later legislation, and especially the system of taxation it established, will certainly not appear illiberal, intolerant, or oppressive, when compared with the contemporary legislation of Europe; and the session of 1793 abundantly shows that it was ready, with the assent of the Government, to carry great measures of reform.

It is a remarkable, but an incontestable fact, that at the opening of the great French war there was far more unanimity in supporting the Government against the foreign enemy in the Parliament at Dublin than in the Parliament in London. But outside the Protestant Parliament the state of feeling was very different, and the condition of the country was very alarming. Romilly had noticed in the previous year the immense impression which Paine's 'Rights of Man' was making in Ireland, and he had predicted that Ireland was the country in which the deadly contagion of the French Revolution was likely to be most powerfully and most speedily felt.[1] This prediction was now coming true. The party of Wolfe Tone, Butler, Bond, Hamilton Rowan, Emmet, and McNevin looked upon the French Revolution as the dawn of the brightest promise that had ever shone upon Europe, and when they found their country committed to war with the cause to which they were so passionately attached, their bitterness knew no bounds. Their discontent was all the greater because Grattan entirely refused to follow the example of Fox

[1] Romilly's *Life*, i. 427.

in denouncing the war, supported cordially every military measure which was deemed necessary, and only gave a very partial and qualified opposition to the proclamation against the volunteers, the Gunpowder Bill, and the Convention Bill, which were intended to check the dangers from disaffection at home.

The name of Grattan was still so great, his eloquence was so transcendent, his character was so transparently pure, that few open murmurs against him were heard; but from the Opposition as a body the United Irishmen were wholly separated. Wolfe Tone wrote that he had 'long entertained a more sincere contempt for what is called the Opposition than for the common prostitutes of the Treasury Bench, who want at least the vein of hypocrisy.' Emmet, who was perhaps the ablest member of the party, declared that 'The United Irishmen and their adherents thought that Opposition had forfeited all pretence to public confidence' by consenting to the measures for the repression of disaffection, 'at least before any advance had been made to correct the acknowledged radical vice in the representation.'[1] Paine was elected an honorary member of the United Irishmen. Some of its leaders were already in correspondence with prominent French Revolutionists. They were closely connected with democratic societies in England and Scotland. Simon Butler and Rowan met the delegates of the Scotch democratic societies at Edinburgh, and they reported on their return that Scotland was quite as ripe for an active democratic movement as Ulster itself. The popularity of republican sentiments at Belfast was shown by the signs representing Mirabeau, Dumouriez, Franklin, and Washington, which hung in the streets, and in March a fierce

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 45.

riot was occasioned by a party of dragoons who attempted to cut them down.[1]

In June the annual synod of Ulster met. It was a body consisting of the Presbyterian ministers of the North and the presbytery of Dublin, together with a lay delegate from each parish. Such a body might reasonably be regarded as the most faithful representative of the sentiments of the Presbyterians of Ireland, and the meeting was especially interesting, as the Government had very lately augmented the Regium Donum to the Presbyterian ministers in hopes of influencing and attaching them. The synod drew up a very loyal address, but it was a significant fact that it took the occasion to express its dislike to the war, and also its satisfaction at the admission of the Catholics to the privileges of the Constitution.[2]

Indignation at the war was at this time the dominant sentiment of the Belfast party. Addresses were circulated describing it as a war for the persecution of principles, and calling on the people to meet to petition for peace, and to inform the King that their real sentiments were not reflected by the proceedings of the Parliament. 'What is the navigation of the Scheldt to us?' they asked in one of their addresses. 'Why should we interfere because France, like Cromwell, has killed a guilty king? Let the rich who want war pay for it. The people are starving. Trade in all its branches is paralysed. Yet Ireland has no cause of quarrel with France.' The proclamation suppressing the volunteers produced some considerable disturbances, and the balloting for the militia many others. In almost every county it was violently resisted, until the Government wisely resolved to abandon or mitigate the system.

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[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 138; McNevin, pp. 54, 58.

[2] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 60.

Voluntary recruits were largely enlisted. Substitutes were permitted for those who were balloted for. Country gentlemen subscribed bounties in order to induce volunteers to come forward, and some provision was made for the families of militiamen. By these means the ranks were speedily filled, but in spite of all the efforts to suppress them, riots and conspiracies were multiplying. The Government letters in the spring and summer of 1793 are full of accounts of secret drillings; of attempts to form national guards in different towns of Ulster; of the concealment of guns, ammunition, and even cannon; of midnight parties attacking country houses and seizing arms; of the untiring industry with which the levelling principles of the revolution were propagated. The riots of the Peep of Day Boys and Defenders rose and fell, but they had infected many counties, and secret combinations were spreading among the lowest class, to resist the payment of tithes and hearth money, and sometimes of priests' dues, and of rent. Westmorland and Hobart wrote that an oath 'to be true to the Catholic cause' was widely taken; that rude proclamations were circulated declaring that the people 'must have land at ten shillings per acre, and will have no farmers nor great men, and that they are fifty to one gentleman;' that equality not only of religion, but of property, was expected; that large numbers of pikes were manufactured, and that there were constant rumours of an impending insurrection.

It is possible, and indeed probable, that the letters from the Castle were somewhat overcoloured. Westmorland and Hobart were not able men; their letters show some traces of panic, and they were surrounded by men who had long been endeavouring to alarm the English Ministry in order to check the reforming designs of Pitt and Dundas. There can, however, be no reasonable doubt that their information was sub-

stantially correct, and that the condition of the country had in a few months greatly deteriorated. 'The pains which have for these last eighteen months been taken,' writes Hobart, 'to persuade the people of the irresistible force of numbers, has given them such an idea of their strength that until they are actually beaten into a different opinion they will never be quiet. . . . Amongst other considerations, relief from tithes, rents, and taxes, forms no small part of the inducements held out to them; and they are taught to expect the assistance of the French, who, they are told, will participate with them all the blessings of freedom and equality. Whether we are to expect a rebellion to break out in any corner of the kingdom I am very much at a loss to conjecture.' 'The Jacobins are not more inimical to Great Britain than the United Irishmen to the peace of this country; indeed, I am satisfied that they are connected with the worst men in France.'[1] Although the Irish Parliament had voted military forces, including the militia, of not less than 36,000 men, the Lord Lieutenant for a time doubted whether any more troops could be safely sent out of Ireland. 'The danger,' he said, 'to which the lives as well as property of the gentlemen of this country are exposed is a feeling that cannot be resisted. In truth, the people of property and lower order here are as distinct sects as the Gentoos and Mahommedans. The lower order or old Irish consider themselves as plundered and kept out of their property by the English settlers, and on every occasion are ready for riot and revenge.'[2]

Before the close of the session of Parliament the aspect of affairs appears to have somewhat improved. In August, Hobart announced that the country had

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[1] Hobart to Hamilton, June 17; to Nepean, July 21, 1793.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, May 24, 1793.

quieted greatly, and he added his hope 'that the military aid we are to give you will have the benefit of considerably assisting you in the operations of the campaign, without hazarding the peace of Ireland.'[1]

The elements of anarchy and sedition, however, were manifestly multiplying, and from many different quarters dark clouds were gathering on the horizon. The French Revolution, and the rapidly growing political agitation which had arisen, had profoundly altered the conditions of Irish politics, and a great war had immensely added both to their difficulty and to their danger.

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[1] Hobart to Nepean, Aug. 17, 1793.

CHAPTER VII.

WE have seen in the last chapter the remarkable contrast which was presented between the attitude of the Irish Parliament in the spring and summer of 1793 and the general condition of the country. In Parliament the Government, at the outbreak of the great French war, was supported with an almost absolute unanimity. Grattan had declared in the strongest terms that it was both the duty and the interest of Ireland to give England an unequivocal support, and all the important measures of this memorable session for the purpose of maintaining the war, of repressing sedition and insurrection, and of relieving the Catholics from their disabilities, were either carried without a division or by overwhelming majorities. But in the meantime, throughout the country, sedition and anarchy were rapidly spreading. Demonstrations in favour of France and in opposition to the war were constantly multiplying. An extremely seditious press had arisen, and Paine's writings were profusely distributed. Clubs of United Irishmen were formed in numerous counties, and were actively engaged in democratic and revolutionary propagandism. The Defender movement was assuming a new character and a new importance, and efforts were made in the towns to enroll national guards modelled after those of France.

The relations between discontented Irishmen and French agents were becoming very frequent, and from this time Irish affairs began to occupy a prominent place in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. There is reason to believe that one, at least, of the Catholic delegates who came to London in December 1792 to present to the King the petition of the Catholic Convention had on that occasion a secret interview with Chauvelin, who does not, however, appear to have given much encouragement.[1] Nearly at the same time Lord Edward Fitzgerald came to Paris on a visit to Paine, and he is said to have assured him that if the French could enable 4,000 volunteers to subsist in Ireland for a few months, a revolution could be effected. Lebrun, who was then Minister for Foreign Affairs, was so much impressed with the statement, that he resolved to send another secret agent to Ireland, and selected, at the recommendation of Paine, an American named Oswald, who had volunteered in the French service and had risen to be colonel of artillery. Oswald passed over to Scotland, and at last succeeded, with much difficulty, in reaching Ireland in June. He had received instructions from the French Minister to enter into communications with disaffected Irishmen, and to offer men and money if an insurrection could be made, but his report to the French Government was not altogether encouraging. He had found, he said, both in Scotland and Ireland the people in great confusion through the numerous bank-

[1] The authority for this statement is a letter from Reinhard to De la Croix, 29 floréal, an iv (May 18, 1796), French Foreign Office. Reinhard says Lord Edward Fitzgerald reminded him of certain communications which the deputies from Ireland, sent to make 'réclamations' to the English Government in December 1792, had with Chauvelin, and adds that Chauvelin had not received them with all the interest the importance of the matter demanded. This negotiation, I imagine, is alluded to in a disjointed fragment of Wolfe Tone's journal, written in March 1793. After referring to the deputation to England &c. he writes: 'Motives of Catholic leaders; not corruption. Some negotiations carried on by one of them in London unknown to the others. The others probably unwilling to risk their estates.' (Tone's *Life*, i. 108, Washington edition.)

ruptcies, the interruption of commerce, and the dismissal of workmen, occasioned by the war, but he thought there was at present little to be expected from Ireland. The people were discontented and agitated, but the volunteers had been successfully suppressed, and Oswald saw no immediate prospect of active insurrection.[1]

The Gunpowder Act and the proclamation against volunteering had been imperatively needed to check a most formidable scheme for arming, under the guise of volunteers, the great body of the republican and disaffected party in Ireland, and placing them under leaders of their own opinions. An incendiary address, urging the volunteers to arm, and to make Catholic emancipation and the extension of the elective franchise to the whole body of the people their leading objects, had been issued by the United Irishmen in December 1792.[2] In the following February delegates from thirty-five volunteer companies, representing more than 2,000 men, had assembled at Antrim and agreed on a scheme for a general arming of volunteers throughout the kingdom, for the appointment of committees and officers to direct them, and for the accumulation of military stores; and they had issued a significant circular to all the volunteers of the country, recommending them not to publish any resolutions.[3] In a report drawn up in the following month by the House of Lords it was stated that prayers for the success of the French arms had been offered up at Belfast from the pulpit, in the presence of military associations which had been newly raised in that town; that bodies of men composed mostly of the lowest classes of the people, and armed and dis-

[1] See the papers of Oswald, June and July 1793, French Foreign Office. See, too, McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 71.

[2] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 234–237.

[3] Tone's *Life*, i. 268.

ciplined under officers chosen by themselves, had been enrolled in different parts of the North; that great supplies of arms and gunpowder had been collected and were collecting at Belfast and Newry; that constant efforts were made to seduce the soldiery and obtain military men to discipline the new levies; that at Belfast bodies of men were drilled and exercised almost every night for several hours by candlelight. The declared object of these military bodies, the report said, was to procure a reform of Parliament, but there was an obvious intention to overawe the Parliament and the Government, and hopes were held out of assistance by a French descent upon Ireland.[1] The establishment in Dublin of national guards closely imitated from those in France has been already mentioned, and the formation of similar bodies was contemplated at Belfast, Derry, and Galway. In Dublin their suppression was not effected without some difficulty; it was found necessary to call out the troops, and the condition of Ulster in the spring of 1793 was so serious that the Government strongly urged the necessity of sending reinforcements to that province.[2]

The great majority of the more conspicuous United Irishmen at this period, as well as in the subsequent periods of the movement, were nominally either Presbyterians or members of the Established Church, though a large proportion of them were indifferent to theological doctrines. Tone, Butler, Emmet, Hamilton Rowan, Napper Tandy, Arthur O'Connor, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Bond, Russell, Drennan, Neilson, and the two Sheares were all Protestants, and Belfast and other parts of Presbyterian Ulster were the special centres of Irish republicanism. On this point the Government

[1] Report from the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, 1793. See Tone's comments on the report, i. 108.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, March 29, 1793.

despatches and the writings of the United Irishmen were perfectly agreed. The Test Act and the disabilities relating to marriage which especially affected the Presbyterians, and the commercial restrictions which were peculiarly felt by a section of the population that was essentially commercial, had, it is true, of late years been abolished, but the resentments they had produced had not passed away. The republican religion of the northern Presbyterians gave them some bias towards republican government, and their sympathy with the New England Puritans in their contest against England had been passionate and avowed. They had scarcely any part among the landed gentry of Ireland, and were therefore less sensible than other Protestants of the necessity of connection with England for the security of their property, while they were more keenly sensible than any other class to the evils of the existing system of government. They claimed to outnumber the members of the Established Church,[1] but under the existing system of monopoly they had scarcely any political power, and scarcely any share in the patronage of the Crown. An intelligent, educated, energetic middle-class community naturally resented such a system of exclusion and monopoly far more keenly than a poor, dependent, and perfectly ignorant Catholic peasantry, and they especially detested the legal obligation of paying tithes to an Episcopalian Church. The growth of

[1] Wolfe Tone pretended that the Protestant Dissenters were twice as numerous as the members of the Established Church (Tone's *Life*, i. 277, 278), but this must have been an enormous exaggeration. In the census of 1834 the former were computed at 664,164, and the latter at 852,064. Mr. Killen, however, gives some reason for believing that the Episcopalians were then overrated and the Presbyterians underrated; and he even claims a slight superiority of numbers for the Presbyterians. (Continuation of Reid's *History of the Irish Presbyterians*, iii. 576–579. See, too, Lewis's *Irish Disturbances*, pp. 342–344.)

religious scepticism or indifference in the intelligent town populations had at the same time prepared the way for the reception of the doctrines of the French Revolution, and for that alliance with the Catholics which the United Irishmen preached as the first condition of obtaining a democratic reform. We have seen the powerful assistance which the northern Protestants had given to the Catholic cause in the latter stages of its struggle, and their strenuous support of the democratic party in the Catholic body, and it is an undoubted and most remarkable fact that almost the whole guiding influence of the seditious movement in 1793 was Protestant or Deistical, while the Catholic gentry, the Catholic prelates, and, as far as can now be judged, the bulk of the Catholic priesthood were strongly opposed to it.

The power of the priesthood, however, in Ireland, as in all other countries, had been diminished by the influences that led to the French Revolution. The Catholic gentry were too small a body to exercise much authority, and their weight had been in the last months steadily declining, partly through the growth of a great Catholic trading interest in the towns, and partly through the secession of Lord Kenmare and his followers from the committee, and the triumph of the democratic party in that body. It is probable, too, that the prediction of Parsons was verified, and that the Relief Act of 1793 still further weakened them. As they could be neither members of Parliament, sheriffs, nor sub-sheriffs, they could not assume their natural place as the leaders of the great political power which the new Act had suddenly called into existence. It is incontestable that a party had arisen among the Catholics which was in full sympathy with the United Irishmen, not only in their desire for Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, but also in the spirit that

animated them, and in the ulterior objects which were gradually dawning on their minds. We have seen that the aims and wishes of Wolfe Tone had been from the beginning directed to a complete separation of Ireland from England,[1] and he tells us that he had privately communicated his genuine political sentiments without any reserve to John Keogh and Richard McCormick, the two men who, after the secession of Lord Kenmare and of his party, were most powerful in the Catholic Committee. It was observed by a Government informer in 1793 that Keogh was a regular attendant at the meetings of the committee of the United Irishmen in Dublin. Tone notices that almost from the first formation of the United Irish Society 'the Catholics flocked in, in crowds,' and he had no more doubts than Duigenan or Clare about the future sedition of the Catholic democracy. 'I well knew,' he wrote, 'that however it might be disguised or suppressed, there existed in the breast of every Irish Catholic an inextinguishable abhorrence of the English name and power.'[2]

Early in 1793, and before the Catholic Relief Bill had been carried, a pamphlet appeared from the pen of Theobald McKenna, who was one of the most prominent literary representatives of the Catholic party of Lord Kenmare, which has much interest as expressing their sentiments. It was called 'An Essay on Parliamentary Reform and the Evils likely to ensue from a Republican Constitution in Ireland,' and it is a solemn protest against the revolutionary and republican tenets which Wolfe Tone and the other United Irishmen were diffusing through Ireland. It was true indeed, he admitted, that a parliamentary reform was much needed in Ireland, and its nature and limits were not difficult to ascertain. The first and most essential defect of the

[1] See pp. 15, 16. [2] Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 52, 55, 63.

Irish Legislature was the exclusion of Catholics from political power. The next was the practical exclusion of merchants, which left the trading interest destitute of its natural influence and weight. To these two causes most of the real evils of the Irish parliamentary system may be traced. Corruption was the natural result of the narrowness of the constituencies, and 'in many counties a great proportion of the men of property were disfranchised under pretext of religion.' The relation of classes was injuriously affected by the same cause, for 'when the gentry feel not any necessity to court the favour of their inferiors, they are deficient in offices of protection and tenderness.' The 'barbarous feudal notion' that still lingered in Ireland, 'that the mercantile is less honourable than other occupations,' was due to the fact that a House of Commons, which was full of lawyers, scarcely contained a single merchant.

At the same time McKenna urged that the Revolution of France should act rather as a warning than an example, and that the dangers of the age sprang rather from democratic than monarchical excess. He dwells on the peril of weakening the Crown; of endangering the connection with England; of throwing the political guidance of the country into the hands of conventions and military associations; of sacrificing the distinctive merits of constitutional government in the pursuit of an impossible equality. 'It matters little,' he said, 'how men are appointed to seats in Parliament provided they be eminent and deserving persons, selected from the different professions of importance. This, in fact, and not the parcelling of the country into districts of nominally equal importance, is a fair and impartial representation.' He denied in the most emphatic terms that Ireland was on the whole an ill-governed country, and that its people were in the deplorable condition represented by Wolfe Tone. 'We are indeed,' he said,

'peculiarly well circumstanced in Ireland. We have the advantages of a limited monarchy without incurring anything near the degree of expense which in other countries is annexed to the maintenance of royalty.' 'The taxes of Ireland even compared with its means are lower than those of any other country.' 'No class of men or branch of manufacture languishes in this country under national imposts. These fall on the superfluities, not on the necessaries of life, and a reduction of them would not augment the poor man's comfort.' 'If the connection were dissolved, or if we adhered so loosely to England that she should learn to consider us a separate nation, the expense of a distinct Government would amount to much more than our present revenue.' The county cess for the maintenance of the roads is often scandalously or unnecessarily extravagant, but at least there is no compulsory labour as in France. 'The bounties on tillage have advanced prosperity in Ireland.' 'The moneyed interest is rising rapidly.'

On one point, however, McKenna fully agreed with Tone. It was that the French Revolution had entirely changed the character of Irish politics. 'The first and greatest of all revolutions,' he says, 'has been produced among us, without the aid of plan or project. The public spirit of the Catholics has been excited. The controversy on the French Revolution extended more universally in Ireland than any other literary discussion. The public mind was prepared by the diffusion of general principles.'

The United Irish movement in the North was chiefly directed by a secret committee which sat at Belfast, and which had established a small sub-committee of correspondence for the purpose of entering into communications with sympathisers in other parts of Ireland. In Dublin there was another committee,

which met at fortnightly and sometimes weekly intervals. The Government had secured one of its members, whose subscription to the society was paid, and who received from time to time remittances in money from the Castle, and in return forwarded anonymous reports of the proceedings of every meeting.[1] The society as yet differed very little from the democratic clubs that had long existed in Great Britain. Several of its members were undoubtedly speculative republicans. All of them were advocates of a measure of very democratic reform, warm admirers of the French Revolution, and strong opponents of the war, and they were bound together by a resolution which stated that the weight of English influence was the master evil in the Government of Ireland, and that it could only be resisted by a cordial union of Irishmen of all religious persuasions. But their real and final object at this time was parliamentary reform on a democratic and unsectarian basis, though some of them were from the first convinced that this could only be obtained by separation, while others believed that it would be attained, like the Constitution of 1782, by a menace of force. This had been the object of the attempted organisation of the National Guards, and two sentences of Flood were often quoted among the United Irishmen: 'When have you negotiated,' he had once said, 'that you have not been deceived? When have you demanded, that you have not succeeded?'

About forty or fifty members were usually present at the meetings of the Dublin Committee. The chief business was electing new members, corresponding with societies in England and Scotland, drawing up addresses

[1] He was a Dublin silk merchant, and can be identified by a letter from Cooke to Nepean, May 26, 1794, in the Record Office. His reports will be found in the 'Secret and Confidential Correspondence' in the Irish State Paper Office.

which were chiefly written by Dr. Drennan, elaborating a plan of parliamentary reform which Irishmen of all classes were exhorted to hang up in their houses or cabins. The quarrel of Napper Tandy with the House of Commons had made 'undefined parliamentary privilege' a leading grievance, and when the House of Lords in the spring of 1793 established a Committee of Secrecy for investigating the disturbances in some counties, and when this committee assumed the power of compelling attendance and enforcing answers upon oath to interrogatories tending to criminate the person examined, the United Irishmen issued a paper contending that it had exceeded its legal power. The House of Lords promptly took up the matter, and by their order Simon Butler, the chairman, and Oliver Bond, the secretary of the society, who signed the paper, were imprisoned for six months and fined 500*l.* each. The fines were paid by the society.[1]

Two other important members of the society about this time passed for a short period from the scene. Napper Tandy, the most indefatigable of the agitators in Ireland, being threatened with prosecutions for libel and for having taken the Defender oath, sought safety on the Continent, and soon after Hamilton Rowan was prosecuted for seditious libel on account of an address to the volunteers. He was defended by Curran in one of the most eloquent speeches ever delivered at the bar, but was found guilty and sentenced to two years' imprisonment and to a fine of 500*l.*

As we have already seen, the United Irishmen were as yet bound by no oath, and the pledge which every member took was a very innocent document, merely binding him to use all his abilities and influence 'to

[1] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 248–253; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 49, 50.

obtain an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament,' and as a means to that end to promote a brotherhood of affection among Irishmen of all religious persuasions. In April 1792, however, a proposal was made to abolish this pledge, 'as it is found by experience that it prevents a number of very warm friends to a reform from joining us; but,' adds the Government agent, 'I shall oppose it, as we have no business with any of your lukewarm fellows who may hesitate at going as great lengths as ourselves. If the test should be abolished, the members will increase amazingly. Therefore resist it.'[1]

The first openly seditious movement appears to have come from a branch society at Lisburn, which applied to the parent society in the beginning of 1793 for assistance to purchase arms and ammunition. The Dublin Committee, after a discussion, resolved 'that it was impossible to comply with their request.' 'In the course of a debate on the above measure,' writes the informer, 'it was strongly urged that it would be highly improper for the society to arm other bodies of men without first adopting the measure themselves; and as their sole intent of first forming themselves into a society was for the purpose of obtaining a full representation of the people in Parliament, that great object should be obtained *if possible* without recourse to arms. Councillor Emmett agreed in the propriety of the resolution, but hoped the society would reserve to itself the expediency of resorting to arms if necessity required the measure.' It was proposed at the same time to get rid of the buttons and cockades, as they kept many from joining. 'I shall oppose the alteration,' wrote the informer, 'for a very substantial reason, which I can explain if necessary to my friends.'[2] In the summer

[1] April 13, 1792 (Irish State Paper Office). [2] January 4, 1793.

'a gentleman waited on Mr. Grattan by the desire of Messrs. Butler and Bond, with a petition to the House of Commons from them, and praying him to present it, which he declined, declaring at the same time that he did not approve of the conduct of the United Irishmen in many instances.'[1]

The materials for writing the secret history of the United Irishmen are very ample, but there were important movements at this time among the Catholics which are much less easy to describe, for the evidence relating to them is at once scanty, conflicting, and prejudiced. I have mentioned the probable effect of the Relief Act of 1793 on the influence of the loyal Catholic gentry. As far as can now be judged, the Protestant gentry were ready to carry out the Act with liberality, and it is remarkable that in this very year, out of the twenty-three grand jurors returned by the high sheriff for the county of Dublin, no fewer than twelve were Catholics,[2] but the clause enabling corporations to elect Catholics was in many, probably in most cases, defeated by the municipal, class, or trade jealousy of the existing members.[3] The Corporation of Dublin continued, as it had long been, violently anti-Catholic; and as the Government exercised an overwhelming influence in that body, the Government bore, in the eyes of the public, a great part of the blame. The Catholic prelates, however, seemed more than satisfied, and they all, to the great indignation of the United Irishmen, joined

[1] May 31, 1793.

[2] *Anthologia Hibernica*, i. 323.

[3] A few curious particulars of what took place in Dublin will be found in the *Anthologia Hibernica*, ii. 74, 75, 316. The 'Corporation of Cutlers, Painters, Stainers, and Stationers, or Guild of St. Luke,' in 1793 unanimously admitted nine Catholics to their freedom. The Guild of Merchants rejected the petition of some Catholics for admission and adjourned the others. The 'Corporation of Shoemakers' acted in the same way. The 'Corporation of Apothecaries' admitted some Catholics.

in an address to the Lord Lieutenant, expressing unbounded loyalty and unqualified gratitude.[1] Munster, most of Connaught, and a great part of Leinster were very free from political troubles; but several counties of Ulster, and some adjoining parts of Leinster and Connaught, were the scenes of disturbances which amounted to little less than civil war.

As we have already seen, the quarrel between the Defenders and the Peep of Day Boys appears to have been at first of the nature of a faction fight, originating in 1784 or 1785 in the hatred which had long subsisted between the poorer Catholics and the poorer Presbyterians in the county of Armagh, and it principally took the form of the plunder of arms, and the wrecking of Catholic chapels and houses. The name taken by the Catholics implies that the Protestants were the aggressors, and the stress of evidence favours the conclusion that in the northern counties this was the case,[2] but many atrocious crimes were perpetrated on each side, and many lives were lost. The disturbances rose and fell during several years. For a time they appear to have been suppressed by the volunteers,[3] but in 1791 and 1792 they broke out again on a much larger scale in the counties of Tyrone, Down, Louth, Meath, Cavan, and Monaghan. There were frequent combats of large bodies of armed men, numerous outrages, rumours of intended massacres of Catholics by Presbyterians and of Presbyterians by Catholics, threatening letters which showed by clear internal evidence that they were the work of very ignorant men. In the county of Louth

[1] McNevin, p. 61.

[2] See McNevin, p. 52; Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 174. Musgrave, who has devoted a good deal of attention to the matter, says it began with a quarrel between two individuals in the county of Armagh in 1784, and speedily expanded, first into a faction fight, and then into a religious war.

[3] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 46.

the Catholics appear to have been the chief offenders, for it is stated that in the spring assizes of 1793 at Dundalk twenty-one Defenders were sentenced to death and thirty-seven to transportation and imprisonment, while thirteen trials for murder were postponed.[1] In the county of Meath, also, which was during several months in a condition of utter social anarchy, it is admitted by the best Catholic authority that the Catholics were the aggressors.[2] The disturbances broke out near the end of 1792, in a part of the county adjoining the county of Cavan, where there were large settlements of Presbyterians, between whom and the Catholics there had long subsisted a traditional animosity. At first the Catholics plundered the Protestants of their arms with impunity, but soon a large body of well-armed Presbyterians, or, as they were still commonly called, 'Scotch,' came from the county of Cavan, accompanied by some resident gentry, and turned the scale. There were pitched battles in broad daylight; soldiers were called out, and many persons were shot. The Presbyterians were accused of having 'overrun the country, pillaged, plundered, and burned without requiring any mark of guilt but religion.' Magistrates were alternately charged with apathy, connivance, timidity, and violent oppression. There was great difficulty in obtaining legal evidence, and two or three informers were murdered.

For six or eight months Defender outrages continued in this county almost uncontrolled, and it was noticed that every kind of crime was perpetrated under the name. It was found that the most efficient means of

[1] Musgrave's *Rebellions in Ireland* (2nd edition), p. 63.

[2] *Candid Account of the Disturbances in the County of Meath in* 1792, 1793, and 1794, by a County Meath Freeholder (Dublin, 1794). This pamphlet, which is evidently written by a well-informed and moderate Catholic, is the fullest account I know of the Defender movement at this period.

suppressing the Defenders was the formation of a secret committee of gentlemen—one of whom was a Catholic—who bound themselves not to disclose the names of informers. At last the gang was broken up and several members turned approvers. A clergyman named Butler appears to have shown admirable courage, judgment, and skill in his capacity as magistrate, and it was said to have been chiefly due to him that in a few months Defenderism scarcely appeared on the western side of the Boyne and Blackwater. In October 1793 he was shot dead near the palace of the Bishop of Meath at Ardbrackan. Two or three leading Catholic shopkeepers of Navan were arrested on suspicion of being concerned in a Popish conspiracy for murdering him, and one of them, of the name of Fay, was put on his trial. He had been secretary of a Catholic meeting at Trim in the preceding year, and seems to have been exceedingly respected by his coreligionists. They alleged that his detention was very harsh and his trial very unfair, and it is at least certain that the evidence against him completely broke down, and that with the full assent of the judge he was honourably acquitted by a Protestant jury. Large rewards had been offered for informers, and it appears that some perjured evidence was brought against respectable Catholics. One informer was actually transported for perjury, and several prisoners were acquitted.[1] In the county of Meath it was noticed with much indignation that while the juries had previously consisted chiefly of Catholics, they were now almost wholly Protestant; but those who have any real knowledge of Irish life will

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 159. A report of Fay's trial was published in Dublin in 1794. There was only a single witness for the prosecution, and he was a man of infamous character, and was contradicted on oath as to several parts of his evidence. I do not, however, see any evidence of unfairness on the part of Judge Downes, who tried the case, and he certainly summed up strongly for an acquittal.

probably hesitate to pronounce that such an exclusion under such circumstances was in the interests of public justice unnecessary.

Lord Bellamont at this time showed great activity both in Cavan and Meath, but in general the great proprietors were absentees, and the difficult and dangerous duty of suppressing the disturbances was thrown chiefly on the smaller Protestant gentry. The motives that were at work in convulsing the country were evidently of many kinds. There was an extreme chronic lawlessness which a spark could at any moment ignite. There was some religious animosity and a great deal of race hatred, for the Scotch Presbyterians and the Irish Catholics were still like separate nations. The late measure of enfranchisement had aroused wild hopes and expectations on one side, exaggerated fears and resentments on the other, and the new position acquired by Catholic forty-shilling freeholders was likely to affect to a considerable degree the competition for land. There was also much keen and real distress, for the year 1793 was eminently a 'hard year,' and great numbers of labourers were out of employment. Defenderism soon ceased to be either a league for mutual protection or a mere system of religious riot. It assumed the usual Irish form of a secret and permanent organisation, held together by oaths, moving under a hidden direction, attracting to itself all kinds of criminals, and making itself the organ of all kinds of discontent. It became to a great extent a new Whiteboy movement, aiming specially at the reduction and abolition of tithes and the redress of agrarian grievances, and in this form it passed rapidly into counties where the poorer population were exclusively Catholic, and where there was little or no religious animosity. It was also early noticed that it was accompanied by nightly meetings for the purposes of drill, and by a profuse distribution of incendiary papers.

Another element of disturbance of a different nature broke out about the same time. The creation of a militia was intended by the Government to be a great measure of pacification; but the new system of compulsory enlistment, which was wholly unnecessary in a country where voluntary recruits were always most easily obtained, was fiercely resented and resisted. Truly or falsely it was generally believed that in the American war the Irish Government had shamefully broken faith with a regiment nicknamed the Green Linnets, which had been enlisted on the understanding that it was not to serve out of Ireland, and which had notwithstanding been transported to America. A report was now spread, and readily believed, that they meant to act with still greater perfidy towards the new militia. It was said that they wished to expatriate or banish those who had signed the declarations originated by the Catholic Committee, and that they were accordingly forcing them into the militia in order to send them to Botany Bay. The officers of the new force were all Protestants, while the privates were Catholics, and there was a growing belief that the ministers were hostile to the Catholics and had not forgiven their recent agitation. The attitude of the grand juries, and the speeches of Foster, and still more of Fitzgibbon, had created suspicions which were industriously fanned, and which passed swiftly and silently from cabin to cabin. In nearly every county there was resistance, and in some it was very formidable. At Athboy, in the county of Meath, 1,000 men took arms. They searched the country houses for guns, and resisted the soldiers so effectually that the result was a drawn battle in which several men were killed. An attack was made on the town of Wexford in order to rescue some prisoners. The expense of soldiers billeted among the people, the fines exacted when the Act was not obeyed, the severe punishment of

rioters, many of whom besides long periods of imprisonment were publicly and severely whipped, and the acts of violence and injustice which were tolerably certain to be occasionally perpetrated by soldiers and perhaps by magistrates in a society so convulsed and disorganised, all added to the discontent. In three or four months, it is true, the military riots were allayed by a measure encouraging voluntary enlistments and making some provision for the families of those who were drawn by lot, but they contributed largely to the growing disaffection and to swell the ranks of the Defenders.[1]

There are numerous letters about these disturbances among the Government papers, but in reading them we must remember the great difficulty Irish magistrates have always had in penetrating the secret motives and intentions of the Catholic population, and the strong fear which actuated many who had bitterly opposed the recent Relief Acts. In Sligo and Roscommon it was reported that 'almost the whole of the lower orders of Roman Catholics are in a state of insurrection' about the Militia Act; and although by the prompt and energetic action of the magistrates in those counties the movement was soon checked, it was spreading to Mayo, and it had become 'obvious that under one pretext or another the minds of the lower classes of Roman Catholics have become unfortunately formed to a readiness for insurrection.'[2] One officer 'would be tempted to attribute the source of these disorders to the Roman Catholics, for the oath of the insurgents chiefly runs to be true to the Catholic cause, if he did not know that some Protestants were among the most daring depredators.' 'The decent Catholics in Sligo,' wrote a magistrate from that county, 'have joined the Protestants,'

[1] McNevin; *Candid Account of the Disturbances in the County of Meath*, p. 60; Gordon, *History of Ireland*, ii. 335, 336.

[2] Westmorland to Dundas, May 25, 29, 1793.

and sixteen insurgents have been taken. The beginning of the trouble was the Militia Act, but the hopes raised by the Popery Act, he thinks, had much to say to it. The people hoped 'that not only religious equality but one of property would be produced. They now find this to be a dream, and they are determined to effect by force that equality of property they vainly hoped for.' 'However, the militia is the pretext,' wrote a magistrate from Enniskillen; 'not one Protestant is concerned in Leitrim, and prisoners have been heard to say that not one Protestant should be alive in a month.' In the county of Wexford the oath bound the Defenders 'to cut down their own clergy to a certain rate of parish dues, not to take tithes from tithe proctors, nor pay more than sixpence per acre for tillage, to be true to each other, not to divulge who has administered the oath,' and 'all smiths and carpenters are sworn not to work for any man who had not taken the oath.' Some of the rioters said they would return peaceably to their homes if they were sure that they would not be kidnapped and forced into the militia. Some were sworn to be true to the Catholic cause, and to pay no rent for three months. Many pikes were found among the Defenders, and on several occasions they encountered the soldiers. Rumours were flying about the country of an impending insurrection, of a massacre of Protestants, of a division of property, of an abolition of rents and taxes, of a secret alliance with the French, who were coming over to sweep away the tithes and free the people from every grievance. In the May of 1794 about seventy persons were killed in a single conflict at Ballina.[1]

To the Irish Government it must have been extremely

[1] See Westmorland to Dundas, March 29, and very numerous letters on the subject in May, June, and July. See, too, the *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 35.

mortifying to contrast the condition of Ireland during the spring and summer of 1793 with her condition during the wars of George II. and even during the American war, when it had been found both possible and easy to send the whole Irish army, except about 5,000 men, to fight the battles of England. Westmorland attributed the evil mainly to the republicans of Belfast and Dublin; to 'the levelling principles of the French Revolution;' to associations connected with the United Irishmen which were propagating sedition with unceasing activity in various parts of Ireland; and to 'the agitation of the Catholic question, which was so managed as to throw the lower orders of that persuasion into a state of fermentation.' He mentions that at a time when the condition of Ulster made it most necessary to send additional troops to that province, he had been prevented from doing so 'by the breaking out of an insurrection of the lower Catholics in the county of Louth, who, being privately instigated by the leaders of seditious associations in Dublin and the North, proceeded to plunder the houses of Protestants of their arms.' 'Their meetings,' he continued, 'and their attacks were by night; they arrayed themselves under different captains, enlisted all the lower Catholics, imposed an oath of secrecy, and endeavoured to learn the use of arms. Their expeditions were so secret for some time as to elude the military. . . . The disorders spread through the counties of Louth, Meath, Dublin, Cavan, Monaghan, and Armagh. All the Protestants were driven into the towns; no gentleman could be in security without a guard in his house, and whenever their attacks were successful the arms were carried off.'[1]

In a discussion on the subject in the House of Lords in the February of 1793, Lord Clonmel stated

[1] Westmorland to Dundas, March 29, 1793.

his belief that French emissaries were already active among the Defenders, and a Secret Committee which was appointed by the House of Lords to investigate the subject, and which is said to have consisted mainly of very anti-Catholic members, threw some suspicion on the Catholic Committee in Dublin. 'The people at this time called Defenders,' the report said, 'are very different from those who originally assumed that appellation, and are all, as far as the committee could discover, of the Roman Catholic persuasion; in general poor, ignorant, labouring men, sworn to secrecy and impressed with an opinion that they are assisting the Catholic cause; in other respects, they do not appear to have any distinct, particular object in view, but they talk of being relieved from hearth money, tithes, county cesses, and of lowering their rents. . . . They assembled mostly in the night, and forced into the houses of Protestants and took from them their arms. . . . At first they took nothing but arms, but afterwards they plundered the houses of everything they could find.' The committee acknowledged that they had no reason to believe that the body of the Roman Catholics in Ireland in any way promoted or countenanced the movement, but they mentioned as suspicious circumstances the regularity and system with which the outrages were committed, the large sums of money that were collected by the authority of the Catholic Committee in the chapels in all parts of the kingdom, and especially the fact that a conspicuous member of the Catholic Committee had made inquiries into the trials of the Defenders, and had employed an agent and counsel to act for several of the accused.[1]

There does not, however, appear to me to be any

[1] This report is reprinted in the appendix to the Report of the Committee of Secrecy, in 1798.

evidence that French emissaries were in connection with the Defenders during the year 1793. The charges against the Catholic Committee were at once and indignantly repudiated. It was shown that the avowed and legitimate objects of the committee fully accounted for the chapel collections; that the committee, instead of promoting, had made earnest efforts to allay a religious animosity which was directly opposed to the alliance with Protestants they were endeavouring to establish, and that if they had undertaken to support in the law courts a Catholic whom they believed to have been unjustly accused, they had abandoned their intention when further inquiry led them to believe that they had been deceived.[1]

The Defender movement is extremely important in Irish history, for it appears to have been mainly through this channel that the great mass of the poorer Roman Catholics passed into the ranks of disaffection. It was ultimately connected with and absorbed in the United Irish movement, and it formed one of the chief Catholic elements in the rebellion of 1798. The parallel between what was then taking place in Ireland and what we have ourselves witnessed is very striking. There were two movements which were at first completely distinct. One was purely political, and was directed by educated men, influenced by political theories and aiming at political ends. The other was a popular movement which speedily became agrarian, and was to a great extent directed against the owners of property. These two movements at last combined, and the result was the most bloody rebellion in modern Irish history.

They were, however, in their origin not only distinct but violently antagonistic. It was the main

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[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 52, 53. See, too, the Catholic address in January 1793 (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 133).

object of the United Irishmen to put an end to the dissension between Catholics and Protestants, and especially to unite the Presbyterians and the Catholics in the closest alliance, for the purpose of breaking the influence of England in Irish politics, and obtaining a democratic and unsectarian measure of parliamentary reform.[1] This was the very purpose for which their society had been constituted, and they had met with great success in the large towns of the North, and especially among the Dissenting ministers. Nothing could be more disconcerting to their plans than a new and violent outburst of religious animosity in the country districts. Wolfe Tone declared that it was 'certainly fomented by the aristocrats of this country,'[2] and he himself, in conjunction with Neilson, Keogh, and Leonard McNally, went on a mission to the county of Down for the purpose of putting an end to the quarrel, and enlisting both parties in the cause of the United Irishmen. He found the soil to a considerable extent prepared for his seed. In one place there had been a meeting of eighteen Dissenting ministers from different parts of Ulster, who were all of them well disposed towards Catholic liberty. At Ballinahinch a United Irishman named McClokey had laboured so effectually, that a corps of volunteers which had been originally raised on Peep of Day principles had chosen him as their lieutenant, and the Catholics now lent the Protestants arms for their exercises and came to see them on their parade. At Newry the delegates induced a large party of Catholics, who had been bicker-

[1] 'My theory of Irish politics,' wrote Wolfe Tone, 'is comprised in these words. I trace all the miseries of Ireland . . . to the blasting influence of England. How is that influence maintained? By perpetuating the spirit of internal dissension grounded on religious distinctions. How, then, is it to be obviated? By a cordial union of all the people.' (*Memoirs*, i. 285.)

[2] Ibid. i. 171.

ing, to meet them at the inn, where Keogh preached peace and union, and advised them to direct their animosities against the common enemy, the monopolists of the country, and the whole company rose with enthusiasm and shook hands, promising to bury all past feuds in oblivion. At Rostrevor a number of Catholics and Protestants were brought together at a public dinner, and a Dissenting minister pronounced the benediction, and the toasts of the United Irishmen were received with enthusiasm.[1] Napper Tandy made similar efforts to turn the Defender movement into the United Irish channel, and he appears to have actually taken the Defender oath in order to penetrate into the secrets of the organisation. The Government discovered the fact, and this, as we have seen, was one cause of his flight to the Continent.[2]

As far as can now be ascertained, however, there was as yet scarcely any political element in the religious riots of the North, or in the outrages that were perpetrated in other parts of Ireland. The rioters belonged almost exclusively to classes sunk in the deepest ignorance and poverty, and a village schoolmaster of Naas, who was hanged in 1796, is said to have been the only educated person who is known to have been identified with them.[3] At the same time it was not difficult to predict that illegal organisations at war with the Government, in the existing condition of Ireland and of Europe, would ultimately become political. The contagion of the great centres of agitation established at Dublin and Belfast; the influence of the 'Northern Star;' the writings of Paine, which were disseminated at an extremely low price, and the proclamations of the 'United Irishmen' inviting the co-operation of the

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 169–177.
[2] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 115; iv. 15.
[3] Ibid. i. 115.

Catholics, were sure to affect an anarchical population suffering under some grievances and much poverty. Besides this, rumours of French invasion were already spreading, and the connection between France and Ireland was so close that any agitation in the greater country produced a responsive pulse in the smaller one. Among educated men, and especially among those of the middle class, the French Revolution had been from the beginning a subject of the keenest interest and discussion, but the interest was not restricted to them. The ideas of an English peasant seldom extended beyond his county town, and the continental world was to him almost as unknown as the world beyond the grave. But tens of thousands of young Irishmen had passed from the wretched cabins of the South and West to the great armies of the Continent. From almost every village, from almost every family of Catholic Ireland, one or more members had gone forth, and visions of sunny lands beyond the sea, where the Catholic was not looked upon as a slave, and where Irish talent and ambition found a welcome and a home, continually floated before the imaginations of the people. The letters of the Irish exiles, the active smuggling trade which was carried on around the Irish coast, the foreign education of the innumerable priests and monks who moved among the poor, kept up the connection, and it was strengthened by the strong natural affinity of character between the Irish and the French. Names of great battles where Irish soldiers had borne an honoured part under a foreign flag were remembered with pride, and vague, distorted images of the events that were happening in France—of the abolition of tithes, of the revolution in landed property, of the offer of French assistance to all suffering nations—soon began to penetrate to the cottier's cabin, and to mingle with the cottier's dreams.

For the present, however, the danger seemed averted, and in the latter part of 1793 the militia riots appear to have wholly ceased, while the disturbances of the Defenders had greatly diminished. In July, Hobart wrote to England that the country was in so alarming a state that he was quite unable to conjecture whether a rebellion would not break out in every corner of the kingdom.[1] In August he pronounced the country almost quiet, and he was already preparing to send a powerful reinforcement of Irish troops to the war.[2] Ten promotions in the Irish peerage were made as the reward of services during the past session, and among the promoted peers was Fitzgibbon, the Chancellor, who now became a viscount. Westmorland had spoken in the strongest terms of the value of his services, and had especially insisted on the sacrifice he had made in voting for the Catholic Relief Bill in spite of his conviction of its dangers,[3] but the promotion at this critical time of a man who was justly regarded as the most formidable enemy of the Catholics was, in my judgment, a great political mistake. Before the Parliament met for the session of 1794, Hobart himself had been created a peer and had resigned his office in Ireland.

The quiet continued with little intermission during 1794. Emmet, who had the best means of information, confessed that a great inaction on the question of reform had at this time fallen upon the nation.[4] It was partly due to the defeats, and partly to the excesses, of the French, and partly also to the great measures of the last session, and to the political attitude of Grattan. While on all occasions maintaining with the most fervid eloquence the cause of nationality and the cause of

[1] Hobart to Nepean, July 21, 1793.
[2] Ibid. August 17, 1793.
[3] Westmorland to Nepean, March 21, 1793.
[4] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 66–69.

Catholic emancipation, it was his strongest conviction that the true interests of England and Ireland were inseparable, and that no greater calamity could befall the lesser country than the growth of the spirit of disloyalty to the connection. He hated French ideas almost as cordially as Burke, and on the question of the French war it soon became apparent that he had completely separated from Fox. In the session of 1793 this was rather gathered from his tone than expressly asserted, but in speaking on the address in the January of 1794 his language was entirely unambiguous. He had always, he said, maintained that Ireland should improve her Constitution, correct its abuses, and assimilate it as nearly as possible to that of Great Britain, but that 'this general plan of conduct should be pursued by Ireland, with a fixed, steady, and unalterable resolution to stand or fall with Great Britain. Whenever Great Britain, therefore,' he continued, 'should be clearly involved in war, it is my idea that Ireland should grant her a decided and unequivocal support, except that war should be carried on against her own liberty.' [1]

The speech was not pleasing to all Grattan's friends, and it was a profound disappointment to the United Irishmen. 'Politics do not go on well, I think,' wrote Lord Edward Fitzgerald. 'The leaders of Opposition

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 145. The report in the Parliamentary Debates is exceedingly abridged. The new secretary, Douglas, in reporting the speech to England, said that Grattan said 'that the errors of the Government in this kingdom had been in a great degree corrected by laws of the last session; that he deemed other measures of reform, and particularly a proper reform of Parliament, to be necessary, and trusted that the servants of the Crown would concur in them; that he did not, however, mean to propose such measures as matters of stipulation, but should give his unconditional support to the assistance of Great Britain engaged in a war with our natural enemy, France, without questioning the merits or conduct of that war.' (Douglas to Nepean, Jan. 21, 1794.)

are all afraid of the people and distrusted by them. . . . Grattan's speech last night on the address was very bad, and the worst doctrine ever laid down, viz. that this country is bound, right or wrong, without inquiry to support England in any war she may undertake.'[1] The Government view of it was clearly shown in a very confidential letter which was written shortly after, by Cooke. 'You are doubtless extremely pleased,' he said, 'in England with the conduct of the Irish Parliament. I now write just to put you in mind of the measures which passed in the last session. They were the seed, you are now reaping the fruits. If the Place Bill, the Pension Bill, and the Treasury Board had not been granted, Mr. Grattan could not with honour have supported. . . . What would have been the effect of a strong parliamentary Opposition which could add the discontent of the moderate to the plots of the factious, is easy to be conjectured. But now the support of the moderate, conjoined to the force of Government, is able to extinguish sedition. . . . Much credit is due to Mr. Grattan. He told Sir J. Parnell last year privately, that if the concessions in agitation were granted, he would no longer give any vexatious opposition. He has more than made good his word, for he has given decided support. Previous to the opening of the session, it was known from his private conversation in the country that he would support the war, but I believe he did not fully communicate to the members acting with him in opposition, the decided part he intended to take.'

His speech, in the opinion of Cooke, spread consternation among his own followers, but its result was that the address was carried without dissent or amendment. 'What use,' continues Cooke, 'are we to make

[1] Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, i. 234, 235.

of this conjuncture? My best opinion is that Grattan is the most important character in Ireland, and that attaching him to Mr. Pitt's Government would be essential. This is difficult. He is very high-minded and resentful, and suspicious. He is, however, very steady and honourable, and will act up to his professions. He has great sway over the public mind, and he must play such a part as not to lose his authority. He wants not, perhaps would not take, situation; he would stipulate for measures. If any compliment were shown him, he would like it immediately from Mr. Pitt. In the uncertainty of events his conduct here might be decisive, and therefore he should be early thought of. Government is strong in numbers. They want not aristocratical addition. They want the chief of the people. . . . The lower classes are, however, still indisposed in many parts, and there is an active French party which we are endeavouring to watch.' [1]

Although the authority of Grattan for a time quelled all opposition to the war, an indirect protest was a few days later made by Sir Lawrence Parsons. This very able man had been a devoted friend, follower, and admirer of Flood, and if the Government was rightly informed he was far from friendly to Grattan. He moved an address asking that copies of all the treaties and conventions which had been laid before the British Parliament should be laid before the Parliament of Ireland, and he appears to have supported his motion on the ground that it was the right and duty of the Irish Parliament to discuss the cause and conduct of the war. Grattan, however, strongly and eloquently opposed him. The right of the Irish Parliament to call for treaties, he said, was universally admitted, but to exercise that right at this critical moment would be to

[1] Cooke to Nepean, Feb. 7, 1794.

tell France that Ireland had not made up her mind on the war. It would check military efforts and chill the military spirit at a time when the promptest energy was supremely necessary, and it would give a new vitality to the French party in the country. Only nine members voted for the address, while one hundred and twenty-eight opposed it.[1]

There were only two other subjects of considerable importance discussed in Parliament during this year. Grattan again brought forward his motion asserting the necessity of establishing a definite and final commercial understanding between the two countries on the basis of perfect reciprocity, the manufactures of Ireland being received in the ports of Great Britain on the same terms on which the manufactures of Great Britain were received in the ports of Ireland. His speech on the subject was strongly hostile to protecting duties on either side, and his views of commercial policy appear to have been not less enlightened than those of Pitt. The proposition was received on the part of the Government with a profusion of compliments, but with an earnest plea for delay, and it was accordingly at their desire withdrawn. We shall see that, a few years later, one of the ministerial arguments for the Union was that no such commercial arrangement existed.[2]

The other important measure of the session was Ponsonby's Reform Bill. It was substantially the same as that of last year, its principal features being the addition of a third member to each of the thirty-two counties, and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and the opening of the boroughs by extending the right of voting in them to all 10*l.* freeholders in a specified

[1] The Parliamentary Debates (xiv. 16) do not report the speeches, but Cooke notices the debate (to Nepean, Feb. 7), and Grattan's speech is given in his *Collected Speeches*, iii. 119–122.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 48–53. Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 122–127.

section of the adjoining country. There was little more to be said about the anomalies of the Irish parliamentary system, but it had been recently shown by a detailed statement, that out of the 300 members of the House of Commons 124 were actually nominated by 52 peers, and 64 by 36 commoners, while 13 others were said to owe their return in a great measure to the influence of single families.[1] The debate on the subject was very able, and the transcendent importance of meeting the democratic and revolutionary spirit by removing indefensible abuses, and placing the representation on a broad and safe basis, was strongly urged. Grattan, Jephson, and Parsons spoke with admirable force upon this theme, but the first at the same time repudiated emphatically the democratic Reform Bill of the United Irishmen, and exposed the dangers of the theory of personal representation with a strength of reasoning and language which Burke himself could hardly have surpassed. The principal argument on the other side was the danger of reform in time of revolution, and the fate of the moderate reformers in France. The Government resisted the Bill, and it was rejected by 142 votes to 44.[2]

In justifying the reintroduction of a Bill which had been rejected in the preceding year, Ponsonby said: 'There was one capital objection which then existed against the measure, but which is now done away. The country was then in a state of disturbance, it is now in perfect tranquillity.'[3] This assertion is fully corrobo-

[1] *Anthologia Hibernica*, ii. 268–71. In a pamphlet published in 1797 there is a slightly different analysis of the representation. According to this account, forty-one temporal peers returned 112 members; four spiritual peers 8; private persons 96; thirty-two counties 64; three cities 10; four boroughs 6; potwalloping boroughs 4. (*An Appeal to the Understanding of Englishmen on the State of Ireland.* London, 1797.)

[2] *Parl. Debates*, xiv. 62–108.

[3] Ibid. p. 62.

rated by a private letter from Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to Lord Hobart. He speaks emphatically of the great tranquillity of Irish politics. 'Nothing but some mistaken principles of politics can now disturb us. We have got a loan of near 1,400,000*l.* and new taxes necessarily affecting the bulk of the people without murmur, and there is no appearance at present of the revival of the sedition which lately prevailed.'[1] The short and peaceful session was terminated on March 25.

The proceedings of the United Irishmen in the early part of the year, as they were reported by the Government informer, were not very important. The usual attendance at the Dublin meetings seems to have sunk to thirty or thirty-four. A suspicion had spread that Government spies were abroad, and the informer describes a curious scene which took place at a meeting on the last day of January. After some ordinary business had been transacted, 'Mr. Nelson said that though a stranger in town and almost so to every member of the society, except in sympathy of sentiments, he boldly declared that he had the strongest assurances that there were traitors in the society, who constantly conveyed whatever passed in it within a few hours after, nay a few moments, to the Castle; and in order at this very solemn crisis to guard against the effect of treason, he would recommend the society to appoint a committee of twelve, to be called the Committee of Public Welfare, with powers to transact all the business of the society. . . . Mr. Simon Butler declared that he wished the hall to be uncovered, and all the people of Dublin, of all Ireland, to be present at their debates, as he knew of nothing having been agitated but what was perfectly constitutional. . . .

[1] Parnell to Lord Hobart, March 1794.

Nothing material,' continued the informer, 'will be attempted but through the committee proposed by Nelson, and you may depend on it that such a one, self-elected, now exists. If you have any idea of the cause of those suspicions, for God's sake let me know. . . . I will see you towards evening at eight o'clock.' A fortnight later the same subject of traitors in the camp was brought forward by John Sheares, who proposed a dissolution of the society, and a new ballot. He afterwards consented to withdraw his proposal, and Butler again asserted that all their proceedings were perfectly legal. There was evidently great distrust and much discouragement in the party, and when Grattan made his attack on their reform scheme, both Sheares and Emmet considered the incident a fortunate one, as the parliamentary notice had 'rescued the society from that state of insignificance into which it had lately fallen.'[1] A reply was issued by the society which commented in very bitter terms on the conduct of Grattan and of the Opposition.

The measures of the United Irishmen, however, were not all so innocuous. The events of the last session had fully convinced them that no party in Parliament was in the least likely to accept their scheme of universal suffrage and equal electoral districts, while the triumphant march of the French arms made French assistance continually more probable. In the spring of 1794 a new and important overture was made to them. The agent chosen by the French Committee of Public Safety was an Anglican clergyman named William Jackson, who had once been a popular preacher in London, had afterwards been employed by the notorious Duchess of Kingston in her quarrel with Foote, and had attained an infamous notoriety as the chief instigator of

[1] February 1, 15, 22; March 8, 1794 (I.S.P.O.)

a groundless and atrocious charge against that dramatist.[1] After these transactions Jackson had long lived in France, where he professed strong revolutionary sentiments, and he undertook to ascertain what support might be expected from the English democratic party in the event of an invasion. Finding the result of his inquiry in England very discouraging, he determined to proceed to Ireland, and he confided his mission and his intention to an attorney named Cockayne, with whom he had long been on terms of friendship, and who, like himself, had been in the service of the Duchess of Kingston. Cockayne at once betrayed him, and by the direction of the Government pretended to enter into his scheme, and accompanied him to Dublin.

Cockayne had formed a professional friendship with Leonard McNally, a Dublin barrister, who had mixed much in the proceedings of the United Irishmen, and at the table of McNally the two travellers met several of the leaders of the party, who received them cordially and spoke freely of their hopes. They obtained without difficulty access to Hamilton Rowan, who was still in prison and who threw himself heartily into the French designs, and a representation of the state of Ireland, written by Wolfe Tone, but copied by Rowan, was given to Jackson to be presented to the French Government. Jackson was delighted with it, and desired Tone himself to go to France to lay his views before the Committee of Public Safety. Tone at first accepted, but afterwards refused, and Jackson did not encourage the proposal of Rowan that Dr. Reynolds, another leading member of the party, should undertake the charge. In the meantime, through the instrumentality of Cockayne, the representation of Tone fell into the hands of the Government, and on April 24, 1794, Jackson was

[1] See Cooke's *Life of Foote*, i. 209–231.

thrown into prison on a charge of treason. The perfidy of Cockayne was still unsuspected.

A whole year elapsed before Jackson was tried, and the Government for some time doubted what course they would pursue. There was a chance that Jackson might turn King's evidence against the leading conspirators, but even in that case the evidence against them seemed very slender, so it was determined to prosecute Jackson.[1] The knowledge of his arrest spread much alarm among the United Irishmen. Tone indeed remained to brave the consequences, and no prosecution against him was instituted, but Reynolds fled to America, and Rowan, who had hitherto taken a very prominent part among the United Irishmen, contrived on May 1 to escape from prison and make his way to France. Unlike most of those who were engaged in the conspiracy, he was a gentleman of fortune and position. He was foolish and impulsive, but also brave, honourable, chivalrous, energetic, and charitable, a man of great physical strength and beauty, always ready to meet any opponent with his pistol, and to throw himself headlong into adventures. A proclamation was at once issued and widely disseminated offering a reward of 1,000*l.* from the Government and of 500*l.* from the City

[1] 'The Attorney-General is afraid if Drennan is caught that we have not a tittle of evidence against him, and as little against Tone, for you observe Cockayne, whose evidence will be taken *cum grano*, will not speak positively to the different conversations of these persons, but only caught the substance by hints and accidental words. I cannot agree in thinking it wise to save Jackson and punish the others. Jackson is sure to be convicted; with him we should very likely fail in punishing either of the other two. With how bad an appearance of evidence (Cockayne and Jackson, hardly a corroborating circumstance) we should go into court. Not a person in court but would attribute the whole scheme to a snare, and the Government would be sadly disgraced.' (Westmorland to Dundas, May 12, 1794.) Cockayne had previously been tried for perjury, but acquitted.

for his capture, but a friend named Sweetman procured a small fishing boat manned by three poor sailors to take him to France. The sailors had not been informed of the service for which they were engaged, but before they started on their long and perilous journey one of them drew from his pocket the Government proclamation and asked if this was Mr. Rowan they were carrying to France. 'Yes,' said Sweetman, 'and here he is.' 'By God,' was the reply, 'we will land him safely;' and turning to Rowan he said, 'Our boat is small, but God watches over those who, like you, have the blessings of the poor.'[1] They kept their word, and placed him on shore near Brest. A few days after his flight, the Government, acting on the information of their habitual informer, seized the room where the United Irishmen met, took possession of their papers, and for a time broke up the organisation.

A more marked tone of disloyalty was now manifestly spreading through the country. A large proportion of the Belfast party had long been theoretical republicans, but they always declared that they would have been content with a democratic parliamentary reform. The attitude of the Government and of the Parliament during the last session convinced them that it would be easier to obtain a republic than a reform under the existing Government; that without foreign aid they could never effectually resist the coalition between the English Government and the Irish aristocracy, and that their chance of obtaining such aid was now very considerable. They had at the same time begun to argue, as Adams and his colleagues had argued in the beginning of the American troubles, that the French would only assist them in a struggle for independence. The

[1] Rowan's *Autobiography*. Letter of H. Rowan to the Committee of Public Safety, 10 vendémiaire, an iii. (Oct. 1, 1794), F.F.O.

reform of the Irish Parliament could be no object to France. The establishment of an independent Irish republic would be a great triumph of French policy. With the vast dissemination of seditious or republican literature the area of discontent was enlarging, and it was spreading more and more among the Catholics. The signs, indeed, were not yet clear and unequivocal, and some months were still to elapse before they became so; but it was impossible that the new doctrines of political equality, of the indefeasible right of majorities to govern, of the iniquity of tithes and other religious endowments, should not have their influence upon men who would gain so greatly by their triumph. The gentry and the higher clergy reflected very faithfully the Catholic conservatism of Europe; but the tradesmen and merchants, who were so active in the towns, were of a different type. Some of the most important members of the Catholic Committee were unquestionably seditious, and, in spite of the very earnest remonstrance of Grattan, the committee retained Wolfe Tone as its secretary. Colonel Blaquiere in the session of 1794 startled and scandalised the House of Commons by declaring his belief that 'there was not a man among them who, in case of commotion, could find fifty followers on his estate perfectly attached to the Constitution.' 'What,' he continued, 'had the poor to defend? Was it because their landlord now and then gave them a dinner, or treated them civilly when he met them, that they should be attached to him?'[1] He believed that half the nation, or more than half, were attached to the French.

His words were drowned in indignant denials. In no country, it was said, were the landlords less oppressive than in Ireland; but an uneasy feeling was abroad, and although outrages and riots appear to have

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiv. 37.

somewhat diminished, those who knew the country best, believed that the Defender system was advancing with a rapid though stealthy progress. Our best evidence seems to show that it was not yet connected with the United Irish movement, and that it aimed chiefly at Whiteboy objects, but a political element was beginning very perceptibly to mingle with it. The idea was spreading that the redress of all grievances would be effected by a French invasion, and that in the event of such an invasion it was the duty of the Defenders to assist it. Oaths pledging them to do so were in some districts largely taken, and in others the project was well understood.[1] That it had not taken as much hold upon the people as was sometimes thought, is proved by the most decisive of all arguments, by their actual conduct when an invasion took place; but there were at least signs that what was to be feared among the poorest Catholic population was not merely turbulence and lawlessness, but also a positive hostility to the connection.

The influence of Grattan also had been fatally weakened. His position was at this time one of the most difficult that can fall to the lot of any statesman, and he was maintaining it with admirable courage and skill. At a time when the enthusiasm for the French Revolution was at its height, when French ideas and theories of reform were making numerous proselytes among the adventurous and enthusiastic, he was steadily opposing the stream, preaching at once the duty of a close connection with England and the Whig theory of the Constitution. But unlike those who occupied a corresponding position in England, Grattan continued to be a zealous and consistent reformer, contending that

[1] See the interesting sketch of Defenderism in 1793, by Emmet. (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 71.)

without the abolition of political distinctions on account of religion and a temperate reform of Parliament there could be no security in Ireland. In one aspect of his policy he resembled Burke; in the other he resembled Fox. It was inevitable under these circumstances that his position should have been somewhat isolated. The coalesced interests opposed to all reform detested him as the most formidable enemy to their monopolies, and much of the enthusiasm which had in old days supported him was passing into new channels. His loyalty to the connection, his support of the war, his inflexible opposition to the United Ireland scheme of radical and democratic reform, had alienated the class of mind which naturally bends with the dominant enthusiasm of the time. With the better class of Catholics he had, it is true, still great authority, and his influence was perhaps even greater with his own class—with the great body of Protestant gentlemen of moderate fortune who were unconnected with the chief borough owners, and who, though they were very inadequately represented in Parliament, comprised perhaps the largest part of the patriotism, the intelligence, and the energy of Ireland.

It seemed, however, for a time as if his policy and his power were about to rise higher than ever. In July 1794 the long-pending secession from the Whig party in England took place, and the Duke of Portland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Spencer, and Windham joined the Government. By this change, at a time when the aspect of affairs on the Continent was peculiarly menacing, parties in England were virtually united in support of the war, and opposition sank into complete insignificance; but if the adhesion of the Whig leaders gave Pitt a great accession of strength, it also brought with it some embarrassments. The section of the Whig party which joined him was so important that it was entitled to claim a large share both of patronage and

power, but Pitt was scarcely less autocratic in his cabinet than his father and Walpole, and Dundas appears to have been the only minister to whose judgment he greatly deferred. With a prime minister of this character it might easily be foreseen that the introduction into the Cabinet of politicians of great rank, great parliamentary following, great pretensions and very moderate abilities, drawn from the opposite party, was likely to lead to difficulties. The negotiations that preceded and immediately followed the coalition were carried on almost entirely by conversations, and when this is the case it will nearly always be found that misunderstandings arise even among men of the most indisputable honour. The general drift of propositions is remembered, but qualifications and limitations by which they had been guarded are neglected or underrated. Something is tacitly assumed on one side which the other side had not meant to concede, and men who starting from opposite points are anxious to come to an agreement, will often half unconsciously omit, attenuate, or evade topics of difference. Add to this that the Whig leaders never professed to have abandoned any of their old views of domestic policy, though they undertook to support the war; that the King, though glad to break up the Whig party, still looked on all who had supported that party with suspicion and aversion, and that a great portion of Pitt's own followers, as Burke truly said, 'considered Mr. Pitt's enlarging his bottom as an interloping on their monopoly,'[1] and it will be easily understood that there were abundant elements of disagreement.

These considerations will not appear irrelevant when we attempt to thread our way through the perplexed and contradictory evidence relating to the viceroyalty

[1] See a very remarkable letter in Windham's *Diary*, p. 326.

of Lord Fitzwilliam. When the coalition was formed in July, the third Secretaryship of State, which had been abolished in 1782, was revived. Lord Grenville was now Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dundas for War and the Colonies, and Portland for the Home Department, which comprised Ireland as well as Great Britain. It is a significant fact that at the very outset of the coalition a grave misunderstanding arose between Dundas and Portland about the limits of their respective provinces,[1] but it is at least certain that Ireland lay within the department of Portland; it is equally certain that the Whig leaders believed that Portland was to have the chief direction of Irish politics, that Lord Westmorland was to be replaced by a Lord Lieutenant belonging to the Whig party, and that some change of system favourable to the Catholics was to be effected.

It is true, indeed, that Pelham, who was Chief Secretary in Ireland in the Administration that succeeded that of Lord Fitzwilliam, asserted in the Irish House of Commons that the Duke of Portland had coalesced with Pitt 'unconditionally,' 'without any stipulation whatever,'[2] but the evidence in contradiction to this assertion appears to me overwhelming. On July 27, at a time when no dispute had yet arisen, Lord Auckland, who hated the Portland party, sent the following account to Beresford of the secret history of the coalition. 'If Mr. Pitt felt that the calamities of the times required this change (for such it is) in his Administration, there was nothing more to be said. I can freely confide to you my persuasion, that he has made a bad move on his political chess-board. I believe that Dundas was the only person of his old friends materially consulted on the

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 252–255.
[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 184, 190.

occasion. He will find that he has destroyed the weight of a party which was material to be preserved, and which will now become at least insignificant, and he will also find that he has gained nothing in point of talents and efficiency; and lastly, that he is in a decided minority in his own Cabinet. I understood that when this coalition was formed, Ireland was offered to the Portland party together with the other offices, which were accepted; and I have heard (which I mention in great confidence) that an apology was made to Lord Camden, to whom Ireland had before been destined. Lord Spencer and the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Fitzwilliam having declined the viceroyalty, it may possibly remain for the present in Lord Westmorland, but that tenure cannot be, I think, long, and in short it is under the Duke of Portland's department.'[1]

It may be said that Auckland, though in intimate connection with the leading statesmen of the Tory party, had no official knowledge of what had occurred, but the evidence of those who had the most incontestable means of knowing is equally decisive. Ponsonby, who had the most intimate private and official relations with Lord Fitzwilliam, declared in Parliament that the 'coalition would never have taken place had not his Grace received ample authority to reform the abuses which he knew existed in the Government.'[2] Grattan, as his son reports, stated that the words of the Duke of Portland to him on the subject were: 'I have taken office, and I have done so because I knew there was to be an entire change of system.'[3] Burke assured Windham that, from a conversation with Portland shortly after the coalition, he gathered that, rightly or wrongly, he 'considered without a doubt that the administration

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[1] *Beresford Correspondence* (privately printed), ii. 37, 38.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 184.

[3] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 193.

of Ireland was left wholly to him, and without any other reserves than what are supposed in every wise and sober servant of the Crown;'[1] and Fitzwilliam himself, who took a leading part through the whole negotiation, has left a most emphatic statement to the same effect. 'When the Duke of Portland,' he wrote, 'and his friends were to be enticed into a coalition with Mr. Pitt's Administration, it was necessary to hold out such lures as would make the coalition palatable, or even possible, for them to accede to. If the general management and superintendence of Ireland had not been offered to his Grace, that coalition would never have taken place. The sentiments that he had entertained and the language he had held so publicly for many years back on the subject, rendered it a point that could not be dispensed with. Accordingly it was offered from the beginning of the negotiation, as was also the Home Department of Secretary of State.'[2]

When the coalition took place, Fitzwilliam was appointed President of the Council; but as there appears to have been a difficulty in finding a Whig Lord Lieutenant, in fulfilment of the arrangement that has been

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[1] Windham's *Diary*, p. 322.

[2] *Second Letter to Lord Carlisle*, pp. 25, 26. Grattan, in one of his speeches on the subject, said: 'It has been said that the reform of abuses in Ireland formed no part of the ground of the coalition. I do not pretend to say what did form that ground, but I do say that one quarter of the Cabinet did assert that a principal inducement to his acceptance of office was a reform in the abuses of the Irish Government. . . . One great motive to the acceptance of office was stated to be very extensive powers in Ireland.' (*Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 191.) Lord Holland says that the Duke of Portland distinctly encouraged these hopes '"At least we have secured the Catholics," said he to some English friends; and he did not scruple to affirm to Mr. Grattan that his chief object in taking office was to secure the objects which the Irish Whigs had pursued, and a large share of the patronage and power in Ireland to their party. Nearly thus did Lord Fitzwilliam understand it.' (*Mems. of the Whig Party*, i. 74.)

indicated, Fitzwilliam, after long hesitation and with great reluctance, consented to accept the post. It was stipulated that Lord Westmorland must first be provided for, but subject to this condition the nomination was fully accepted by Pitt. It was settled, at least as early as August 11,[1] and the arrangement seems to me quite inexplicable, except on the supposition that some real change of policy was contemplated, and that Irish affairs were in a very special sense under the direction of the Whig section of the Cabinet. Lord Fitzwilliam had scarcely a month before accepted a Cabinet office in England. He had no wish to go to Ireland, and Lord Westmorland never appears to have intimated any intention of resigning. If it was intended to make no change in the system of governing Ireland, the whole proceeding is unintelligible.

Independently of all negotiations, the mere fact of the accession of a great portion of the Whig party to office had a powerful and an immediate effect in Ireland. Portland had been Lord Lieutenant when the independence of the Irish Parliament had been conceded in 1782; he was known to be in favour of Catholic emancipation, and Grattan had long regarded him with an admiration which he would scarcely have felt if he had had the advantage of perusing his confidential despatches. Fitzwilliam was extremely popular in Ireland from his large property, his decided advocacy of the Catholics, and his close friendship with Grattan. Ponsonby, who had publicly committed himself to the admission of Catholics to Parliament, and to a moderate parliamentary reform, and Grattan, who was the most powerful advocate of both measures, had long been in closer connection and correspondence with the party which had joined the Government than with any other

[1] See Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets of George III.* ii. 281.

section of English politicians. They were essentially Whigs, and it was inevitable that their influence and their policy should appear to have gained by the coalition of the Whig leaders with the Government. Nor did there seem any reason for believing that the completion of the Act of 1793 would be distasteful to the other section of the Cabinet. The policy of admitting the Catholics to political power was the policy of Pitt. It had been steadily advocated by his Government. The opposition which restricted or delayed the measure did not come from England, or from the Irish Parliament, or, to any considerable extent, from the Irish Protestants, but from a small junto of high officials in Ireland under the guidance of Fitzgibbon. Irish public opinion was now in so dangerous and critical a condition that it would be in the highest degree calamitous to raise hopes and then refuse to fulfil them, and the simple fact of the accession of the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam to power at once brought the Catholic question again to the forefront. 'I have the best grounds for believing,' Lord Fitzwilliam afterwards wrote, 'that on the day of the Duke of Portland's kissing hands, it was determined to bring it [the Catholic question] forward this session. All the old friends with whom he had acted when he was here as Lord Lieutenant, and whom, it was concluded, he would again call to his councils on taking to himself the Government, of which there was at that time a general expectation, were known from their public declarations and from their proceedings in Parliament to intend a full and complete emancipation; his own opinions were universally believed to coincide with his Irish friends', as to my knowledge they certainly did. Immediate measures were therefore taken by the Catholics preparatory to the expected change of administration here.'[1]

[1] *First Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 16.

The first proceeding of Lord Fitzwilliam, after he had consented to be the future Lord Lieutenant, is very significant, and shows decisively how fully his position was recognised by Pitt's section of the Cabinet. As early as August 11 he wrote to Thomas Grenville, who was then in a diplomatic capacity at Vienna, offering him the post of Chief Secretary in his coming Administration. Thomas Grenville was brother of Lord Grenville, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and one of the most important colleagues of Pitt before the coalition had taken place. It must also be noticed that he had been offered and had refused this office in 1782, when the Duke of Portland had been made Lord Lieutenant.[1] Thomas Grenville would have greatly preferred an English post, but he was very anxious to leave the Continent; and after consultation with his brother, and with the full assent of his brother, he accepted the office, expressing, however, at the same time his hope that if an English office became vacant, Portland would not forget his claims.[2]

Not quite a fortnight after he had written to Thomas Grenville, Lord Fitzwilliam wrote to Grattan. He stated that, though he was not yet appointed to succeed Lord Westmorland, there was certainly 'great probability of that event taking place very soon;' that he intended to pursue the same system as the Duke of Portland had pursued when he was Lord Lieutenant; that his main object would be 'to purify, as far as circumstances and prudence will permit, the principles of government, in the hopes of thereby restoring it to that tone and spirit which so happily prevailed formerly,' but that he despaired of succeeding in this attempt unless he obtained the support of distinguished Irishmen. 'It is, sir, to you,' he added, 'and your friends the Ponsonbys, that I look for assistance. . . . With-

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 299. [2] Ibid. pp. 277, 300.

out the hope, which I am vain enough to entertain, of that assistance, I should decline engaging in so hopeless a task as the government of Ireland. It is that assistance which I am, therefore, now soliciting. I know well the honourable, the useful, the important support Government has received at your hands on many critical occasions and at different periods; but except during the momentary administration of the Duke of Portland, I believe it has so happened that you never have approached the Castle in confidence and avowed friendship; great obstacles have always stood in the way. Should these obstacles be removed, I trust that distance will no longer be necessary, and that I may entertain a hope of seeing you form with the Castle that sort of intimate, direct, and avowed connection as will render support doubly efficacious.' In a postscript he added: 'I beg not to be quoted as having announced myself in the character of a Lord Lieutenant elect; my name not having yet been mentioned to the King, on account of his absence at Weymouth.'[1]

Grattan, however, persisted in the resolution which he had early formed that he would not take office under the Crown, and would content himself with giving an independent support. He appears to have considered that he had pledged himself to such a course when he accepted a grant from Parliament, and he probably thought that in the very difficult position he had assumed as at once the head of the reform party in Parliament and one of the chief opponents of the republican party in Ulster, it was essential to his authority that his disinterestedness should be beyond possible suspicion. At the same time he could not neglect the invitation of Lord Fitzwilliam. Early in September he went over to London to consult with the

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 173. (The letter was written August 23, 1794.)

leading statesmen. The two Ponsonby brothers, Sir John Parnell the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, and some other Irish politicians were there, and they had conferences not only with the Portland section of the Cabinet, but also with Pitt and with the Grenvilles. As far as can now be gathered, Grattan does not appear to have at all desired the removal of all who held office under Lord Westmorland's Administration. With Sir John Parnell, at least, he was on terms of the most intimate friendship, and he insisted, in opposition to some of his own friends, that Parnell should continue in office, but he seems to have represented that if any serious advance was to be made in the direction either of parliamentary reform or of Catholic emancipation, it would be necessary to remove some prominent officials, and especially the Chancellor, Lord Fitzgibbon. These men had been the most persistent and vehement opponents of all changes in those directions. They had defeated the efforts of the English Government in 1792, and in 1793 Fitzgibbon had done his utmost to destroy the conciliatory effect of the Relief Bill by a speech fraught with the bitterest invective against the Catholics. He had asserted, with a cynical boldness that no other politician had approached, the propriety of governing Ireland by corruption, and he was at the head of a small group who were virtually controlling the Executive and using all their power for the maintenance of monopolies and abuses.

The particulars of the interviews in England are very imperfectly preserved. Grattan noticed that the Grenvilles and Ponsonbys seemed cold and hostile to each other, and, although Pitt treated all parties with courtesy, some disquieting sentences fell from him. When Parnell spoke with congratulation of the union that was being accomplished between the Protestants and the Catholics, Pitt answered, 'Very true, sir; but

the question is, whose will they be?' 'What does Ireland want?' he said on another occasion to Grattan; 'she has already got much.'[1] At the same time, for some weeks neither Portland nor Fitzwilliam, nor any member of their party, appears to have had the smallest doubt that the contemplated arrangements would be effected. The details, however, were still in the stage of confidential negotiation, and it is a singular fact that no communication on the subject from the responsible minister, appears as yet to have been made to the Irish Government. In a letter written on September 5 to Auckland, Lord Sheffield mentions an interview which he had had with Douglas, the Chief Secretary of Lord Westmorland, and adds: 'It is curious that he seems to know nothing of the appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam to the viceroyalty of Ireland.'[2]

It appears to me evident from these statements, that there had been much less frankness, fullness, and precision than there ought to have been in the discussion of Irish affairs. The system of government to be pursued had not been clearly defined or settled, nor had the limits of the powers of the new minister been formally ascertained. On the other hand, the department of Ireland had been definitely placed under the direction of Portland, who was at the head of the Whig section of the Cabinet. Fitzwilliam as the representative of that section had been offered and had accepted the viceroyalty. Although the post was not yet vacant, he was actually engaged, with the full knowledge of Pitt, in framing the outline of his Government, and the ministerial Whigs had, as it seems to me, ample reason to conclude that Pitt was prepared to place the general direction of Irish affairs in their hands, and to assent to the system of policy which they notoriously advocated.

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 174–177.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 237. Compare Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 313.

The negotiation with Ponsonby and Grattan was carried on with perfect openness, and it could have but one significance. It must have meant that the Government was inclined to look with favour on moderate parliamentary reform, and on the admission of the Catholics into the Irish Parliament, or at least upon one of these measures. It was impossible that the steps which had been taken could be disclosed without raising in Ireland hopes which it would be most dangerous to disappoint.

In the letters of Lord Grenville we may trace the first signs of the dissension which soon became so formidable. On September 15 he wrote to Thomas Grenville: 'I am afraid there is less discretion on that subject [Ireland] than there should be. The intended successor of Lord Westmorland is talked of more openly than I think useful at a time when there is yet no arrangement made for his quitting his station. But, what is worse than that, ideas are going about, and are much encouraged in Dublim, of *new systems* there, and of changes of men and measures. Whatever it may be prudent to *do* in that respect, I know that you will agree with me, that till the time comes when that question is to be considered with a view to acting upon it immediately, the less *said* about it the better.'[1]

Twelve days later, in a letter to Lord Buckingham, he complains that Buckingham had too readily believed vague reports about the Government of Ireland. 'I know of no such measure as you say we have adopted. I have never varied in my opinion as to the impolicy of the conduct held in Ireland during the time of Lord Rockingham's Administration, nor do I believe that anyone is disposed to repeat that conduct now. . . . I certainly have not, for one, consented, as you express it, to surrender Ireland to the Duke of Portland and Lord

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 302.

Fitzwilliam, under the Government of Mr. Ponsonby.' At the same time he does not see why the Government should feel any particular interest in the existing system in Ireland, and he added some enigmatical words which probably pointed to a great change in the constitutional relation of the two countries, that was already in the minds of the ministers. 'It has long appeared to me, and, I believe, to you also, that to make the connection with Ireland permanently useful to Great Britain, that connection must be strengthened by a systematic plan of measures, well considered and steadily pursued. Whether the present moment, or any other moment that is in near prospect, would be favourable to such a plan, is another and a more difficult question, but I am sure that every year that is lost increases the hazard of our situation as with respect to Ireland. . . . I cannot conceive what other interest you or I have, or ought to have, on that subject except that Ireland should be so managed, if possible, as not to be an additional difficulty in our way, when so many others are likely to occur.' [1]

It was not, however, till about the middle of October that the storm burst. The Duke of Portland urged the immediate appointment of Fitzwilliam as a thing already arranged, and explanations speedily ensued, which disclosed an entirely unexpected amount of disagreement, and for more than a fortnight made it probable that the coalition would fall to pieces.

The evidence concerning this quarrel is not very abundant or very consistent, but the chief points at issue may, I think, be ascertained with tolerable clearness. Pitt did not dispute that Lord Fitzwilliam had been duly designated as the future Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, but he maintained that Portland and Fitzwilliam had exceeded their powers when they communi-

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 305, 306.

cated with the Ponsonbys and other persons in Ireland, on the understanding that a change of administration was immediately to take place, and especially when they intimated that Fitzgibbon was to be removed, and that a change in the system of government in Ireland was to be made. 'I am fully determined,' he wrote to Dundas, 'that I will not give way either to Lord Westmorland's recall without a proper situation for him here, or to Lord Fitzgibbon's removal on any terms.' 'I am confirmed,' he wrote to Windham, 'in the impossibility either of consenting to the Chancellor's removal, or of leaving either him or any of the supporters of Government exposed to the risk of the new system.' 'Besides the impossibility of sacrificing any supporters of Government or exposing them to the risk of a new system, I ought to add that the very idea of a new system (as far as I understand what is meant by that term), and especially one formed without previous communication or concert with the rest of the King's servants here, or with the friends of Government in Ireland, is in itself what I feel it utterly impossible to accede to.' In a memorandum which he appears to have drawn up for his own use during the discussion, he expresses his opinion that the best solution of the difficulty would be that Lord Fitzwilliam should not go to Ireland, but that it was impossible, if satisfaction were given on other points, to put a negative on his going. The change of administration in Ireland, however, could only be permitted on four conditions. First, all idea of a new system of measures or of new principles of government in Ireland, as well as of any separate and exclusive right to conduct the department of Ireland differently from any other in the King's service, must be disclaimed and relinquished; second, complete security must be given that Lord Fitzgibbon and all the supporters of Government shall not be displaced on the change, nor

while they continue to act fairly in support of such a system as shall be approved in England; third, a seat in the Cabinet, and also a great Court office, must be found for Lord Westmorland; and fourth, an adequate provision must be made for Douglas, the present Chief Secretary.[1]

The dispute on both sides was extremely angry. The transfer of the chief management of Ireland to the Whig section of the Cabinet had, it was said, been one of the main conditions of the coalition; the selection from that section of a future Lord Lieutenant had been one of its first results, and it could never have been intended—though Pitt now evidently desired it—that the actual change should be postponed to a distant and indefinite future. The offer of the Chief Secretaryship to the brother of Lord Grenville, and the interviews of Pitt with Ponsonby and with Grattan, furnished on this point conclusive arguments. It had, it is true, been stipulated that Westmorland was to receive another office before Lord Fitzwilliam was appointed, but it was understood that Pitt would at once make it his business to create a vacancy, and it could not be seriously contended that he was unable to do so. The Duke of Portland, as a former Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had his own political connections in that country, and it had been very naturally assumed that when Ireland was again placed under his direction, those connections would be again entrusted with a great part of the administration; in other words, that a change of power and patronage would take place, in some degree resembling that which follows a change of ministry in England. Grattan, it is true, who acted during the whole of this crisis with an admirable temper and moderation, appears to have cared very little what men were in office, but some of the other leaders of his party

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 283, 289–291.

placed no control upon their indignation. They accused Pitt of having duped them, of having obtained their alliance on false pretences. The management of Ireland, they said, had been expressly offered to them, and offered without reservation. The right of appointing to offices in Ireland naturally belonged to the Lord Lieutenant and Secretary of State for the Home Department, and it was fully within their province to pension off a secretary or even a chancellor. From the fact that the new ministers had a well-known Irish policy and a well-known set of Irish connections, it plainly followed that when they were entrusted with power, that policy and those connections would be in the ascendant, and they asserted that it had been clearly intimated at the time of the junction that a change of system must take place. To offer the management of Ireland was perfectly nugatory, if the Secretary of State and the Lord Lieutenant were divested of their natural right of appointing or removing officials. Pitt, it was said, had allowed his new colleagues to go on week after week till they had so committed themselves that they could not recede without dishonour, and he had then withheld from them the powers of which they had every reason to believe themselves possessed. The question was not a mere question of men. Serious reforms in Ireland would never be accomplished if the chief posts of influence and power were in the hands of their opponents, and a viceroyalty was likely to be little more than a prolonged humiliation if there was no cordiality between the head and his subordinates.

The substantial justice of these complaints appears to me incontestable. On the other side it was denied that any change of system such as was described had been contemplated or promised at the time of the coalition, or that the new ministers had any right to

displace the old and faithful servants of the Crown. The Whigs were accused of treating the government of Ireland as a mere departmental question which might be determined without the consent or even the knowledge of the remainder of the Cabinet. 'The system of introducing English party into Ireland,' wrote Grenville, 'the principle of connecting changes of Government here with the removal of persons high in office there, . . . is so utterly irreconcilable with any view that I have of the state of that country, that I should be inexcusable if I could make myself a party to such a measure, and in this opinion Pitt entirely concurs.' If 'a new system of men and measures' had been intended before the junction, it ought surely to have been stated then; if it had only been conceived since that event, it ought to have been communicated to the Cabinet 'before any pledge or assurance was given to individuals who might be concerned in it' in Ireland. The removal of Lord Fitzgibbon was completely inadmissible. Lord Grenville asserted—what it is utterly incredible that any man who knew Ireland can have believed—that 'the only ground on which the Ponsonbys can desire the Chancellor's removal is the conduct he held during the Regency,' and that it would be therefore dishonourable and degrading for those who had been ministers during that contest to permit it. The question was treated on this side, as merely a question of patronage. 'The Portland set,' said Lord Auckland, 'are absorbed in the old and sleepy game of patronage, in the pursuit of which they are at this instant risking the convulsion of Ireland.'[1]

Burke was at this time removed from active politics, and overwhelmed with grief on account of the very recent death of his son; but Windham, who was the

[1] *Auckland Papers*, iii. 253; Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 312–316.

most devoted of all his disciples, was one of the recent adherents to the ministry, and the old statesman tore himself from his private sorrow to write some admirable letters on the crisis that was pending. He viewed it with profound grief, but also with much impartiality. To Pitt he was under great recent obligation, and he looked upon him as the one man who could resist the invasions of Jacobinism. To the Whig leaders who had taken part in the secession he was attached by many years of private friendship and political co-operation; their junction with Pitt had been the realisation of his most ardent wish, and he at the same time followed Irish politics with a greater interest and knowledge than any other statesman in England. He considered the dispute that had arisen, a calamity of the first magnitude. There were politicians, no doubt, who would tell Pitt that 'the disgracing his colleagues would be to him a signal triumph,' 'a splendid mark of his power and superiority,' but such politicians were very short-sighted. Pitt could have gone on without a junction with the Whigs, but his ministry, which was of such transcendent importance to Europe, could hardly long survive a new disruption; yet Burke did not see how Portland and Fitzwilliam could remain in office without utterly discrediting their characters. What were the exact terms of the arrangement between the Whig leaders and Pitt on the subject of Ireland, he did not pretend to say. All he knew was that Portland and Fitzwilliam considered without a doubt that the administration of Ireland was left wholly to them, and 'proceeded as if there was no controversy whatever on the subject;' that Fitzwilliam 'hesitated a long time whether he should take the station;' that when he agreed to it, he thought he had done a real service to the ministry, and that, anticipating no difficulties from his colleagues, he 'invited several persons

to converse with him in all the confidence with which men ought to open themselves to a person of honour, who though not actually, was virtually in office.' It was not in accordance with strict prudence, or 'with an entire decorum with regard to the other Cabinet Ministers, to go so far into detail as has been done, until all the circumstances of the appointment were settled in a more distinct and specific manner than they had been.' The Whig leaders undoubtedly 'thought that a very large discretion was committed to them,' but they must have been strangely mistaken, for 'it seems Mr. Pitt had no thought at all of a change in the Irish Government, or, if he had, it was dependent on Lord Westmorland's sense of the fitness of some other office to accommodate him on his resignation. . . . These are some of the mischiefs which arise from a want of clear explanation on the first digestion of any political system.'

The great question was whether Lord Fitzwilliam could honourably consent either to continue in his present office, abandoning his claims to the viceroyalty, or to accept the viceroyalty on the terms on which it was now offered to him? 'With infinite sorrow'—'with sorrow inexpressible,' Burke concluded that both courses were impossible. 'He has consulted with many people from Ireland of all descriptions as if he were virtually Lord Lieutenant. The Duke of Portland has acted upon that supposition as a fundamental part of his arrangement. Lord Fitzwilliam cannot shrink into his shell again, without being thought a light man, in whom no person can place any confidence. If, on the other hand, he takes the sword not only without power, but with a direct negative put upon his power, he is a Lord Lieutenant disgraced and degraded.' He must resign, and those who entered into the ministry with him must accompany him.

Englishmen with little knowledge of Ireland, considered the question a mere personal one, and asked why Fitzgibbon might not continue Chancellor while Fitzwilliam was Viceroy. 'After what has passed, the true question is, which of the two is to govern Ireland.' No position can be more helpless or degrading than that of a Lord Lieutenant who is not effectually supported by the English Minister, who is surrounded by subordinates opposed to him, and is liable to be thwarted at every turn by the parties in Ireland. If this is the position intended for Lord Fitzwilliam, a worse choice could not have been made, and it would have been far better to keep Lord Westmorland in Ireland. 'It is not to know Ireland to say that what is called Opposition is what will give trouble to a real viceroy. His embarrassments are upon the part of those who ought to be the supports of English Government, but who have formed themselves into a cabal to destroy the King's authority, and to divide the country as a spoil amongst one another. *Non regnum sed magnum latrocinium*—the motto ought to be put under the harp.'

'Ireland,' he continued, 'is no longer an obscure dependency of this kingdom. What is done there, vitally affects the whole system of Europe. . . . It will be a strong digue to keep out Jacobinism, or a broken bank to let it in. . . . By the meditated and systematic corruption . . . of some, and the headlong violence and tyrannical spirit of others, totally destitute of wisdom, and the more incurably so as not being destitute of some flashy parts,[1] it is brought into a very perilous situation.' If the junto who were governing it were not speedily checked, Burke clearly predicted that a calamity was inevitable which might involve the ruin of the Em-

[1] An evident portrait of Fitzgibbon.

pire. 'There is a set of men in Ireland who . . . by their innumerable corruptions, frauds, oppressions, and follies were opening a back door for Jacobinism to rush in. . . . As surely as you and I exist, so surely this will be the consequence of their persisting in their system.'[1]

In reviewing this whole controversy, it appears to me evident that the Whig leaders had just reason to complain of the conduct of Pitt—that they had real grounds for believing that powers had been promised them, which were afterwards withdrawn or denied. It seems as if Pitt had either failed to realise the full import of the concessions he had made, or else had changed his mind, and desired to withdraw from a position which was disadvantageous to him. The secret motives that governed him, must always be a matter of conjecture. What motives were likely to be attributed to him, Burke very clearly stated. The Whig leaders had been warned before they made the alliance, that it was not in the character of Pitt to give them any real confidence or any real share of power—that he would accept their alliance, but on the first difference, when they had broken with their friends and original connections, and had lost all credit with the independent part of the country, and all power of formidable opposition, would turn them out as objects of universal scorn and derision.

It is not, however, necessary, or, I believe, just, to attribute such calculations to Pitt. Like most English statesmen, he had a very slight and superficial knowledge of Irish affairs, which depended upon conditions of character and circumstances wholly unlike those with which he was familiar, and from the moment the contemplated change was announced, a constant stream of the most alarming letters, which were evidently intended

[1] Windham's *Diary*, pp. 321–333.

to be laid before him, poured over from the high officials in Ireland. If the proposed changes were effected, it was said, Ireland would pass completely into the hands of the Duke of Portland, and the Government in England would never be able to take it out of them again. The Ponsonbys were already boasting that they were the masters of the country. The whole of the highly artificial system by which the Irish Government was kept in permanent subjection to the English Executive would be broken. Popular questions would acquire a momentum that it would be henceforth impossible to withstand. Those men who had for years made it their policy to resist the popular wishes, and to act on all occasions as the exclusive servants of the English Government, would consider themselves betrayed, and would either sink into complete impotence, or enlist under new banners. The main object of Pitt's Irish policy was to keep the country at once quiet and subservient, and he was most anxious that no new field of domestic embarrassment should be opened at a time when the condition of the Continent and the prospects of the war were so alarming. He was full of doubt about the dispositions and future tendencies of the Irish people. He could give Irish affairs but a small share of his attention, and he was told that if he carried out the arrangement that was proposed, they would pass wholly and for ever beyond his control.

The demand for the removal of Fitzgibbon must, also, have been peculiarly unpalatable to him. It was quite true that the part which this able man had taken both on the question of Reform and on the question of the Catholics had made his removal a matter of the first political importance or necessity if a policy of conciliation was to be pursued, and in this consideration the path of duty was, I think, clearly indicated. But, on the other hand, Fitzgibbon in 1788,

almost alone among prominent Irish politicians, and at the imminent risk of the ruin of his career, had supported Pitt on the Regency question, and had supported him against the very men who now asked for his removal. We have seen, from the letter of Lord Grenville, that it was already pretended that the part taken by Fitzgibbon in the Regency debates was the real reason of the demand. It was quite in the character of Pitt that the dread of such an imputation or misconstruction should have weighed with him more heavily than the great political issues that were at stake.

It is possible that another consideration may have entered into his calculations. We have seen that the project of a legislative union was already in his mind as the ultimate solution of Irish politics, and that it had been warmly encouraged by Lord Westmorland. Fitzgibbon, next to Castlereagh, was the Irishman who did most to carry it; and although there is, I believe, no absolute proof that he at this time knew the designs of the Government, it is, at least, highly probable. Westmorland confided in him more than in any other Irish politician. Fitzgibbon had always strongly maintained the necessity of keeping the whole machinery of Irish politics in complete and permanent subordination to the English Executive; and he has himself stated, that ever since the Relief Act of 1793 he had looked forward to a legislative union, and had uniformly pressed its urgent necessity on the English Ministers.[1] The astronomer can detect the attracting or disturbing presence of an invisible planet by the aberrations of the bodies that are in sight, and Irish writers have long believed that the secret design of an union was the cause and the explanation of much that appears mysterious in the proceedings of Pitt. We shall find, I think, some confirmation here-

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 8; Clare's *Speech on the Union*, p. 3.

after of the suspicion. It is, at least, certain, that if the Irish representative system had been reformed, the chances of carrying such a measure would have been enormously diminished. Pitt may not have believed those who told him, with perfect truth, that if that system were not reformed, a rebellion would in a short time become inevitable.

The quarrel between Pitt and his new allies lasted for some weeks, but it was finally composed by an imperfect and unsatisfactory compromise. The recall of Lord Westmorland was hastened; he was transferred to the position of Mastership of the Horse, and Lord Fitzwilliam was appointed to succeed him. Thomas Grenville declined the office of Chief Secretary, and it was conferred upon Lord Milton. It was agreed that Fitzgibbon should remain Chancellor, and that no general change should be made in the Irish Administration. It is extraordinary and most inexcusable that, after the experience he had just had, Lord Fitzwilliam did not insist on the exact terms of his powers being clearly defined, and defined in writing, but so it was. He, at least, fully believed that he was authorised to remove some men in whom he could not place confidence, though probably not without compensation. We shall see that this power was afterwards disputed.

Apart from questions of patronage, the great pressing question was that of the admission of Catholics to Parliament, and on this question the line indicated to Lord Fitzwilliam was tolerably clear. He was instructed not to bring it forward as a Government measure, and if possible to prevent its agitation, and to obtain its postponement till the peace. At the same time, Pitt announced himself in principle favourable to the measure, and if, contrary to the wishes of the Government, Lord Fitzwilliam found it so pressed that it could not be evaded, he was authorised to accept and to support it.

It may be advisable to give the exact words of some of the chief persons concerned in the question, as a controversy subsequently arose upon it. 'I was decidedly of opinion,' Lord Fitzwilliam afterwards wrote, 'that not only sound policy, but justice, required, on the part of Great Britain, that the work which was left imperfect in 1793 ought to be completed, and the Catholics relieved from every remaining disqualification. In this opinion the Duke of Portland uniformly concurred with me; and when this question came under discussion previous to my departure for Ireland, I found the Cabinet, with Mr. Pitt at their head, strongly impressed with the same conviction. Had I found it otherwise, I never would have undertaken the government. I at first proposed that if the additional indulgences should be offered from the Throne, the very best effects would be secured; . . . but to this proposal objections were stated, that appeared of sufficient weight to induce the adoption of another plan. I consented not to bring the question forward on the part of Government, but rather to endeavour to keep back until a period of more general tranquillity, when so many material objects might not press upon the Government; but as the principle we agreed on, and the necessity of its being brought into full effect, was universally allowed, it was at the same time resolved, that if the Catholics should appear determined to stir the business, and to bring it before Parliament, I was to give it a handsome support on the part of Government.'[1]

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[1] *Letter to Lord Carlisle*, pp. 3, 4. In a debate in 1799, speaking of his administration, Fitzwilliam said: 'Yielding to the argument of not wishing to entangle Government in difficulties upon the subject at that period, I admit that, under orders, clearly understood by me, not to give rise to or bring forward the question of Catholic emancipation on the part of Government, I assumed the government of Ireland. But, in yielding to this

This statement of fact has never been disputed, though after the quarrel, which is to be described, the Government accentuated somewhat more strongly than Lord Fitzwilliam had done, the undoubted fact that they had desired that the question should, if possible, be adjourned. 'As to the Catholic question,' wrote Portland, 'it was understood that Lord Fitzwilliam was to exert his endeavours to prevent its being agitated at all.'[1]

Lord Fitzwilliam arrived in Ireland on January 4, 1795; but before his arrival, the agitation for Catholic emancipation had fully begun. The knowledge that statesmen who were avowedly favourable to it were in power, and the belief, that was rapidly spread, that they had full authority to carry the measure, had very naturally an instantaneous effect. The Catholic Committee, which had fallen into a somewhat dormant state, at once became active, and in December 1794 it was resolved that in the ensuing session an application should be made to Parliament, praying for a total repeal of the penal and restrictive laws affecting the Catholics of Ireland, that this address should be entrusted for presentation to Grattan, that the Catholics all over Ireland should be recommended to petition for the measure, and that an address should be presented to Lord Fitzwilliam

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argument, I entered my protest against resisting the question, if it should be brought forward from any other quarter; and I made most distinct declarations, that, in case of its being so brought forward, it should receive my full support. With these declarations, I assumed the government of Ireland. This I state upon my honour.' (*Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 672.) In perfect harmony with this statement were the words, describing his intentions on the Catholic question, used by Pitt to Grattan, which the latter at once wrote down, and which were published by his son: 'Not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but, if Government were pressed, to yield to it.' (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 177.)

[1] Secret instructions to Lord Camden, March 26, 1795.

on his arrival. 'I was no sooner landed,' he afterwards wrote, 'and informed of the real state of things here, than I found that this question would force itself upon my *immediate* consideration.'[1]

There was an interval of not quite three weeks before the meeting of Parliament, and Fitzwilliam employed it in endeavouring to obtain full information on the subject, and in reporting the result of his inquiries to the Duke of Portland. On January 8 he wrote: 'I tremble about the Roman Catholics. I mean, about keeping them quiet for the session, because I find the question already in agitation, and a committee appointed to bring forward a petition for the repeal of the penal and restrictive laws. I will immediately use what efforts I can to stop the progress of it, and bring them back to a confidence in the good intentions of Government, and, relying on that, to defer for the present agitating the question.' Lord Shannon agreed in thinking it ought to be postponed, and if it is brought on, 'I think,' said Fitzwilliam, 'he will be against it, more, I see, for the sake of consistency, than from any fear of mischief arising from its being granted; and, indeed, he expressed very explicitly an opinion, that if its stop could not be negotiated on grounds of temporary expediency, it ought not to be resisted by Government.'[2]

The Lord Lieutenant had no means of acting on the Catholic Committee, but he hoped to put off the question by availing himself of the influence of the leading Catholic gentry. In a letter of the 15th, after describing the successful efforts that were being made to enlist soldiers for the war, both among the Catholics and the Protestants, and the loyal addresses he had received,

[1] Plowden, ii. 468–470. Fitzwilliam's *Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 4.

[2] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 8, 1795.

both from the Dissenters and from the Catholics of Dublin, he adds: 'Towards the latter, the Catholics, I have endeavoured to keep clear of any engagement whatever, though there is nothing in my answer that they can construe into a rejection of what they are *all* looking forward to, the repeal of the remaining penal and restrictive laws. I say all, because I mean not only the Dublin Committee, but the seceders—that is, the noblemen and gentlemen of landed property.' He had sounded Lord Kenmare and Lord Fingall, and found them both moderate and anxious to avoid embarrassing the Government, but they both looked forward to the removal of all disabilities. Lord Fingall especially dwelt on the impossibility of abandoning the hope. 'I conversed with him,' said the Lord Lieutenant, 'upon the general state of those of his persuasion; how completely the great mass were already in possession of equal rights with their fellow-subjects, and upon that ground with what justice we might expect perfect loyalty and attachment on the part of the general mass. He admitted the justice of our expectation, but observed that the reason of the thing did not decide the multitude; that what it was they probably did not know and did not inquire, but they did know that something remained undone for those of their persuasion, and that if there was disaffection to be found among that class (which he admitted, and which not one man of any sort or description hesitates to admit), he conceived this to be the ground of it.'[1]

The very serious condition of the country impressed itself more and more upon the Lord Lieutenant, and he clearly saw that without considerable and permanent remedies, there was everything to be feared. 'Not a day,' he said, 'has passed since my arrival, without in-

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 15, 1795.

telligence received of violence committed in West Meath, Meath, Longford, and Cavan.' He found the whole texture of government miserably weak; scarcely any real responsibility among officials; half a dozen governors sometimes presiding over a single county; magistrates invariably appointed by private favour. In many parts of the country general officers were employed as civil magistrates, and this system, though it approached closely to martial law, was by no means inexpedient, as the soldiery were often 'the only magistracy in real authority,' and the only power who could repress the Defenders. They could, however, give no permanent protection. 'An outrage is committed. Government sends a military force to animate the magistrates; they act under that protection; the outrage is put an end to; all appears submission; the military retire, and the house, life, or family of the magistrate instantly pays the penalty of his activity.'[1] The Defender outrages were not political, but they derived much of their importance from a feeling of sullen and bitter discontent, which had spread through the Catholic population—a discontent which Fitzwilliam was more and more convinced could only be effectually met by the abolition of all religious disqualifications. He had not been more than ten days in the country, before he expressed his judgment and decision on that point. 'I shall not do my duty,' he wrote, 'if I do not distinctly state it as my opinion, that not to grant *cheerfully* on the part of Government all the Catholics wish, will not only be exceedingly impolitic, but perhaps dangerous. The disaffection among the lower orders is universally ad-

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 10, 15, 31, 1795. The Bishop of Cloyne, in a letter to Lord Westmorland, mentions the astonishment and alarm of Lord Fitzwilliam on learning that Defenders were drilling every night in the county of Meath. (*Westmorland Correspondence*, I.S.P.O.)

mitted (though the violences now committed from time to time are not the violences arising from disaffection or political causes, but merely the outrages of banditti, fostered, however, under that pretended cause). Though the higher orders are certainly firmly attached, and to be relied upon, and perhaps the wealthy of the second class hardly less so, because they are fearful for their property, yet the latter, at least, have certainly shown no forwardness to check these outrages and to reconcile the affections of the lowest, which is to be imputed, and can be imputed, to no other cause than that there is something left behind that rankles in their bosoms. They conceive, as they express themselves, that they are marked people, but this done away, . . . I feel confident of their zealous and hearty support in the worst of exigencies.'[1]

If the disabilities were removed, a measure might be carried out, which Fitzwilliam was convinced—and on this point the Chancellor fully agreed with him—would be the only possible remedy for the chronic but spasmodic outbreaks of violence which had become so formidable. It was the creation of 'an armed constabulary composed of the better orders of the people, of those who have an interest in the authority of the law.' Hitherto the police system in Ireland had been utterly inefficient, and when Whiteboys or other depredators became formidable, either the military were called in, or the country gentlemen associated themselves together, raised volunteers among their tenantry, hunted down the banditti, and dealt in a very summary manner with those who fell into their hands.[2] The Peace Preservation Act of 1787 had empowered the Lord Lieutenant to appoint a chief constable in each barony, and the grand juries to appoint

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 15, 1795.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 40. See, too, an example of these associations in Lord Cloncurry's *Personal Recollections*, p. 23.

sixteen Protestant sub-constables in each of the same districts, to pay them, in addition to fixed salaries, threepence a mile for the conveyance of each prisoner whom they apprehended, from the place of arrest to the county gaol, and to give the same sum to any Protestant who assisted them in this duty. The Act was permissive, and many counties failed to adopt it. A few new regulations about the 'baronial constables' were made by an Act of 1792. These men wore no uniform, were under no regular supervision or discipline, and followed their usual occupations when they were not called out for public duty. They were manifestly inadequate to the task of preserving the peace of the country, in a time of widespread and organised lawlessness.[1] One of the first necessities of Ireland was a large and disciplined constabulary, which could habitually discharge the duties that were now thrown upon soldiers or upon volunteers. 'But of what description of men,' asked Fitzwilliam, 'must this constabulary be composed?' 'Of the first tenants, that is, the middle man between the landlord and the tenant. Who are they, and what are they? In three provinces all Catholics. Shall we wait till they have arms in their hands, and then grant them their requests; or shall we begin by making them content, and then confide in them?'

That the Catholics would some day obtain what they desired, he considered indisputable; but by deferring the concessions, Ireland was exposed to the risk that, in the event of invasion, the mass of the people would be found disaffected. He then sums up his views, and states his intentions in language which it was impossible to misunderstand. 'All this,' he writes, 'I submit to your consideration; no time is to be lost; the business

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[1] 27 Geo. III. c. 40; 32 Geo. III. c. 16. Curtis's *Hist. of the Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 2, 3.

will presently be at hand, and the first step I take is of infinite importance (pray do not delay to talk with Pitt on the subject). If I receive no very peremptory directions to the contrary, I shall acquiesce with a good grace, in order to avoid the manifest ill effect of a doubt, or the appearance of hesitation, for in my opinion even the appearance of hesitation may be mischievous to a degree beyond all calculation. Two evils it would inevitably produce, the loss to Government of the confidence and affection of the Catholics, and the giving rise to a Protestant cabal, which will be a certain consequence. On the other hand, a cheerful acquiescence on the part of Government will keep that down perhaps altogether; for in truth the great body of the Protestants feel the necessity, and indeed the propriety, of the measure, and the opposition to it, being among a very few, never can have the semblance of being formidable but inasmuch as Government appears to waver. Convinced as we all are of the necessity as well as fitness of the measure taking place at no distant period, to attempt to defer it, is to incur the certain inconvenience of rendering the Catholics useless at least, if not dangerous, of making them unwilling to act for external defence, unsafe to have committed to their hands the means of restoring law, order, and tranquillity, which can only be restored by the means of a strong police, universally established under the mask of a yeomanry cavalry, about which, as I stated before, there is not to be found a second opinion, provided the relief to the Catholics precedes it; but the one done and the other established, I should feel a great load off my mind. I should look forward to great security from an external enemy, to much good order within.'[1]

In a letter written a few weeks later, he recurred in

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 15, 1795.

very emphatic terms to the growing disaffection of the lower classes in the country districts, and warned the Government to be under no illusions on the subject. 'A shameful want of protection for the lower orders of the people, a partial and harsh measure of law, together with a variety of oppressions, have alienated them from the Government, and rendered them indifferent to the interests of their country. That full and ample extent of right and privilege lately granted to this class of subjects, has failed to reconcile their affections. . . . No man acquainted with the circumstances of this country, if he speaks frankly and honestly, can give any other than this account, that the whole body of the lowest orders of the people are, at the time of my writing, and have been long, in rebellion; that is, if oaths and engagements entered into for the purpose of destroying the Government, and of assisting any foreign invaders, may be said to be a state of rebellion.' The want of arms and leaders, and the disappointment of the hopes of foreign assistance, alone prevented a rebellion.[1]

In addition to his inquiries into the Catholic question, Fitzwilliam, before the meeting of Parliament, either made or proposed a few changes in the Administration. William Ponsonby was recommended for the post of Secretary of State. Sackville Hamilton, and Cooke, who were in subordinate but very confidential positions, were at once removed. 'Neither I nor my Chief Secretary,' wrote Fitzwilliam, 'with whom they were in hourly intercourse, felt inclined to give them that confidence, or to suffer the business of their respective offices to be conducted on the system which we found had been lately introduced there;' and he complained of Cooke, that 'his tone and style rendered his

[1] Fitzwilliam to Pitt, Feb. 14, 1795. In a letter to Portland on the 13th, he mentions the general expectation of a coming rebellion.

approach to a superior not to be supported.' Hamilton was one of the oldest servants of the Crown in Ireland, and he had been Under Secretary for about twenty-five years. He appears to have acquiesced in his dismissal, and to have been contented with the compensation that was promised to him; but Cooke, who was Secretary for War, complained bitterly that a pension of 1,200*l.* a year, which was bestowed on him, was a wholly inadequate reward for his services, and he at once carried his complaint to England. He was an able man, who bore a very important and confidential part in the Irish politics of the last years of the century, and was distinguished for his hostility to Catholic emancipation in the Irish Parliament, for his support of the harshest measures that preceded and immediately followed the rebellion, and for his powerful advocacy of the Union. Fitzwilliam also proposed to the English Government that Wolfe and Toler, the Attorney and Solicitor General, should be removed, and replaced by George Ponsonby and Curran, who were greatly their superiors in debating talent, and who were also in harmony with the new Administration. In case the arrangement was carried out, ample provision was to be made for the removed law officers, and the promotion of George Ponsonby appears to have been recommended by the Duke of Portland.[1]

The change, however, which was really important

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 8, 15, 1795; Fitzwilliam's *Letter to Lord Carlisle.* The case of the removed officials will be found in the letters of Cooke to Buckingham. (*Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 329–333.) There are several particulars relating to these changes in a memorandum on what passed between the ministers and Lord Fitzwilliam, before the departure of the latter for Ireland, which is among the Pelham papers. It is there stated that the ministers thought the position of Secretary of State ought to be combined with that of Chief Secretary, and another position found for W. Ponsonby, and also that Fitzwilliam had not mentioned his intention of promoting Curran.

from its consequences, was the removal of John Beresford, who held the not very prominent office of Commissioner of the Revenue. Beresford was one of the most distinguished examples of a class of politicians who were a peculiar and characteristic product of the Irish political system. He belonged to a family which, though entirely undistinguished in Parliament and in responsible statesmanship, had secured so large a proportion of the minor offices in Administration, had employed its patronage so exclusively for the purpose of building up a family influence, and had formed in this manner so extensive a system of political connections and alliances, that it had become one of the most powerful controlling and directing influences in the Government of Ireland. In a curious and valuable paper drawn up for or by Lord Abercorn in 1791, called an 'Analysis of the Irish Parliament,' in that year, the party which was called the Beresford party is reckoned at only eight members, but it is added that the Chancellor, the Attorney-General, and Cooke were allied with it. John Beresford, the writer says, was the First Commissioner, with an official house and a salary of 2,000*l.* a year, and he had obtained the office of Taster of Wines, with a salary of 1,000*l.* a year, for his own life and that of his eldest son. His son Marcus—an active and useful member of the House—was first counsel to the commissioner, with a salary of 2,000*l.* His second son, John Claudius, had a very lucrative office in the revenue. His son-in-law would probably be provided for in the first law arrangement. William Beresford was Bishop of Ossory, he looked for the highest Church preferment, and he was married to the Chancellor's sister. The son of the Bishop was member for the episcopal borough. The Chancellor had a large following, and the Attorney-General sat in the House of Commons with his son and his nephew. Lord Waterford had the patronage of the counties of Water-

ford and Derry. 'This party,' it was added, 'undoubtedly govern the kingdom.' 'Lord Waterford is said to stand remarkably well with the King, and to have had a constant connection with England, with the persons who had the ear of the minister, such as Mr. Robinson, Mr. Rose, &c.'[1]

The influence was steadily growing. A few years after the viceroyalty of Lord Fitzwilliam, it was said that at least a fourth of all the places in the island were filled with dependants or connections of the Beresfords,[2] and during Fitzwilliam's time the influence of John Beresford was, or was believed to be, so overwhelming, that he was called the King of Ireland.[3] He was politically closely allied with the Chancellor, who was bitterly and notoriously hostile to Fitzwilliam and his policy, and among his correspondents and supporters in England were Auckland, and the last two viceroys, Buckingham and Westmorland. From the first announcement of Lord Fitzwilliam's appointment, Beresford had written of it to England with undisguised hostility and apprehension, and he and his family were strenuously opposed to the Catholic policy of the Viceroy. It was not in the character of Fitzwilliam to brook this rivalry. He said that his confidential servants must be men in whom he could confide; that it was essential to the consequence and dignity of the

[1] I am indebted for my knowledge of this curious paper to the kindness of its possessor, Lord George Hamilton.

[2] Wakefield's *Ireland*, ii. 384.

[3] Beresford himself, in relating his interview with Daly, who came to inform him of the intention of the Government to remove him, reports that Daly said: 'No Lord Lieutenant could exist with my power; that I had made a Lord Chancellor, a Chief Justice of the King's Bench, an Attorney-General, nearly a Primate, and certainly a Commander-in-Chief; that I was at the head of the revenue, and had the law, the army, the revenue, and a great deal of the Church, in my possession: and he said expressly that I was considered the King of Ireland.' (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 51.)

English Government, that family cabals for monopolising the power of the State should be broken up; and that the Government, and Government patronage, in all its branches, should be in the hands of the representative of the Sovereign. One of his first acts after his arrival in Ireland was the dismissal of Beresford. He acted in this matter hastily, curtly, and probably injudiciously, and without waiting for any act of overt opposition; but Beresford was granted for life his entire official salary, and he received an assurance that none of the other members of his family would be removed. 'They were still left,' wrote Fitzwilliam, 'in the full enjoyment of more emoluments than ever were accumulated in any country upon any one family.'[1]

Fitzwilliam believed that this proceeding was within his undoubted powers; and if he had ever any doubts on the subject, they had been removed by an interview with Pitt which took place before his departure for Ireland. He expressly states, that he then told Pitt that it might be necessary for him to remove Beresford, and that Pitt had made no objection.[2] The veracity of Fitzwilliam is beyond dispute, but there was probably on this, as on other points, a misunderstanding. In a memorandum relating to these proceedings which is among the Pelham papers, and which is known to have been corrected by Pitt himself, the following passage occurs: 'It appears that Lord F. conceives himself to have stated to Mr. Pitt, in their first conversation on the subject of Ireland, that he was apprehensive Mr. Beresford must be removed, and that Mr. Pitt made no objection in reply to this. Mr. Pitt has no recollection of anything having been said to him which conveyed to his mind the impression that Mr. Beresford's removal from his office was intended.' Beresford, on his side,

[1] *Letter to Lord Carlisle.* [2] Ibid.

wrote letter after letter to his friends in England, describing himself as an injured and persecuted man; he appealed passionately to Pitt to support him, and he went over to England to lay his complaint before the ministers.[1]

The hatred with which Fitzwilliam was regarded by the old permanent officials can hardly be exaggerated. The Bishop of Cloyne gave Lord Westmorland a curious account of the dinners at the Castle. They were, he said, 'miracles of stupidity.' 'As half the company tremble for their places, and have been for so many years hostile to the other half, not a word is spoken, and Lord F. never speaks himself.' On one occasion, the Bishop says, a long silence was broken by the Speaker, who suddenly called for a bumper 'to the immortal memory of King William, who delivered us from Popery.' Cooke wrote to Lord Westmorland constant accounts of the proceedings of the Lord Lieutenant, which were probably laid before ministers in England, and which give a vivid picture of the consternation and indignation that prevailed. The Ponsonbys, he said, were now all-powerful, and boasted that the kingdom was in their hands. Everything was managed by the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Milton, the two Ponsonbys, Grattan, and Yelverton. The Ponsonbys will now secure their old friends, gain many new ones, and make government impracticable in any form not connected with them. Lord Fitzwilliam is laying 'the crown at the feet of Ned Byrne [of the Catholic Committee], by offering him full powers on the three conditions of supporting the war, which the committee have hitherto opposed; of opposing parliamentary reform, to which they are pledged; and of supporting the peace of the country, which they have notoriously

[1] *Beresford Correspondence*, vol. ii.

disturbed these four years.' 'The universal idea is, that what is proposed must inevitably lead to union or separation.' 'Mr. Pitt seems to have tied all the old friends of Government to the stake, for Lord Fitzwilliam to flog.' 'Mr. Pitt's character depends upon his support of Mr. Beresford.' The dismissal of Beresford is 'one of the sorest wounds English Government could receive.' 'Whatever Government shall take place in England, it must in Ireland crouch to Grattan and the Ponsonbys. They have at length defeated the Crown. They have rooted up all confidence in the Crown, and all confidence in any minister deriving from the Crown.' For himself, he says, after twenty-five years of service, and after all his fidelity to Mr. Pitt, he had lost 1,300*l.* a year 'by this new system of coalition and cordiality.'[1]

While these things were happening in Ireland, the political horizon of Europe was rapidly darkening. The close of 1794 saw the great coalition against France torn by division and treachery, and almost hopelessly shattered by repeated defeats. The Belgic provinces, which had been recovered by the Austrians in 1793, were once more completely French. The Austrians and the Prussians were in full retreat. The French flag floated over every town on the left bank of the Rhine, except Mayence and Luxemburg; the cloud of invasion was manifestly impending over Holland, and it was the belief of the most sagacious judges in England, that if the Dutch ports, shipping, and magazines fell into French hands, an invasion of the British Isles would almost certainly follow. 'There is a gloom over this country,' wrote Auckland in November, 'such as I cannot describe. It is a mixture of rage at the triumphs of the Jacobins, of mortification at our own disgraces,

[1] Bishop of Cloyne to Westmorland, Jan. 12, 1795; Cooke to Westmorland, Jan. 9, 15, 18, 23, 26; Feb. 2, 1795 (*Westmorland Papers*).

of extreme indignation and horror at the infatuated turpitude of some of the allied Powers, of grief and alarm at the ruin which is coming upon Holland and upon the whole European continent, and all this with . . . the doubt whether we can prosecute the war, and the doubt whether it is possible to make any step towards peace.' In England this acute judge did not believe that the spirit of Jacobinism had made much way, but in parts of Scotland it already prevailed, and in Ireland there was a restlessness and a disaffection which a French invasion would assuredly kindle into a blaze. 'The attachment of the country at large to Government,' he added, 'is naturally weakened by the long course of calamities which has baffled and disappointed all the measures of Government. . . . The horror which justly belongs to the wickedness and atrocities of the French Convention, insensibly loses itself in admiration of the French successes, and in a forced acknowledgment of the perseverance, courage, and conduct of the French armies.'[1] In the first weeks of 1795 the dreaded catastrophe arrived. On January 11 the French troops crossed the Waal, and within a fortnight the Prince of Orange had been compelled to fly for refuge to England; the Dutch fleet, which was frozen in the Texel, was captured, and all resistance to the French arms in Holland had ceased.

It was under these gloomy circumstances that the Irish Parliament met on January 22, 1795. The ports and fleets of Holland being now in the hands of the French, Fitzwilliam wrote that he expected a speedy invasion, and he added that the prospect of the defence depended mainly on the attitude of the Catholics.[2] The Speech from the Throne spoke with unusual solemnity of

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[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 261, 271, 272.

[2] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 23, 1795.

'the present awful situation of affairs,' and urged upon the Parliament to make the most strenuous efforts to meet the great and pressing danger. These efforts, the Speech observed, would be facilitated by the encouraging fact that even 'during the existence of such a war as the present, the public revenue, together with the commerce of the kingdom, has kept up, and has even been augmented,' and that 'the great staple manufacture of this kingdom has increased beyond the most sanguine expectations.' In accordance with the wishes of the English Cabinet, nothing was said on the Catholic question, but a hope was expressed that the 'united strength and zeal of every description of subjects' would be elicited, and the Lord Lieutenant expressed his own 'cordial affection to the whole of Ireland.' Parliament was at the same time invited to consider the state of education, with the object of establishing some extended system which might confer its benefits on 'the several descriptions of men which compose his Majesty's faithful subjects in Ireland.'

The address was moved by Grattan. In a long and eloquent speech he reiterated his doctrine that the Irish Parliament should abstain from entering into any investigation of the causes of the war, and should accept the simple fact that England was engaged in it, as a sufficient reason for supporting her. He painted in vivid colours the dangers that menaced Europe from French ambition, the impotence of continental Europe, which could oppose nothing to the revolutionary spirit but 'a chaos of forms without force,' the ruin that would fall upon Ireland if England succumbed, the darkening cloud of invasion that was gathering rapidly upon the horizon. 'You know enough,' he said, 'of the levels of Europe to foresee that that inundation of barbarity and infidelity, that dissolution of government, and that sea of arms, if it swells over the Continent,

must visit our coast.' The French party in Ireland he believed to be still 'contemptible and inconsiderable;' but if Parliament showed any hesitation or division, it might become formidable. The King, he said, by his recommendation to 'national harmony,' 'touched with the sceptre those troubled waters which had long shattered the weary bark of your country, under her various and false pilots, for ages of insane persecution and impious theology.' It was 'a pious and profound recommendation,' 'the olive descending from the throne.' Let Parliament act on the lines which were indicated to it. The present was eminently a time for 'the union of all the property of the country in support of the laws, and all the talents in support of the property, with measures to redress and to unite.'[1]

Scarcely a discordant voice was heard. Duquerry and Lord Edward Fitzgerald alone ventured to say something in favour of peace and of the French;[2] but they found no support, and the loyal addresses to the King and Lord Fitzwilliam were carried with enthusiasm. Perhaps the most remarkable feature in these addresses is their emphatic testimony to the substantial and growing prosperity of the country, even in time of war. After promising to make adequate provision for the war, the Commons continued: 'We learn with the greatest satisfaction that the present state of the commerce and revenue of the kingdom will much facilitate our efforts in making that provision, and do most gratefully acknowledge that an increasing commerce and a rising revenue during the existence of such a war as we are now engaged in, are advantages which, under the Divine Providence, we owe to the care and vigilance of our Sovereign. . . . We view with peculiar joy the

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 4–11.
[2] Lord Milton to J. King, Jan. 22, 1795.

increase of our great staple manufacture, an increase commensurate with our efforts, but exceeding our most sanguine expectations.'[1]

The loyalty of the Parliament did not expend itself in empty words. It at once made greater provisions than any previous Parliament in Ireland had ever done for carrying on the war. The combined force of regulars and militia was raised to a little more than 40,000 men, and a vote of 200,000*l.*, moved by Grattan, for the British navy, was speedily carried. For this last vote the only precedent was that of 1782, when a vote of half that amount had been proposed by Grattan, as a testimony of gratitude and loyalty after the concession of independence. It was in vain that Sir Lawrence Parsons urged, in an impressive speech, that the House should accompany its grant with a stipulation for the equalisation of duties and the reform of Parliament. The grant was carried, Fitzwilliam wrote, 'without a thought of stipulation,' 'all subjects of bargain between the countries as to this point being kept out of sight.'[2] Whatever doubt there might be about the feeling of the

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 17, 18. In presenting the money bills the Speaker said: 'It is owing to the unexampled prosperity and growing resources of the nation that they [the Commons] now offer to his Majesty, without laying much additional burthen on the people, or lessening those bounties and pecuniary encouragements under which trade and manufactures have increased and are increasing; and the same causes have allowed them amidst these liberal supplies to gratify his Majesty's paternal benevolence and their own anxious feelings by relieving all the poorer classes from the tax of hearth money.' (Ibid. p. 155.) In the course of the debates Mr. Cuffe said: 'What was the state of Ireland at this moment? A state of unexampled prosperity. The landlord gets his rent to the hour. The tenant finds money for the produce of his land the moment he brings it to market, and the manufacturer finds employment and payment to his satisfaction. Ireland has the Constitution of England, without its debt.' (Ibid. p. 168; see, too, p. 182.)

[2] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 31; *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 77, 78.

country, there could, at least, be none about the loyalty of the Protestant Parliament, or about the popularity of the Administration of Lord Fitzwilliam.

We must now follow the confidential letters of Fitzwilliam. The Catholic question was rapidly coming to a climax. On January 28, he again recurred to his plan of a yeomanry cavalry, as being the most effectual means of suppressing local disturbances, but he added that it would be prudent to adjourn the measure for the present, 'for should the Catholic question fail, we must think twice before we put arms into the hands of men newly irritated.' He was, however, more and more confident that there was no serious obstacle to be encountered in the Irish Parliament, or from the Irish Protestants, to the complete and immediate settlement of that question. 'I have little doubt,' he says, 'the Catholic business will be carried easily.' In a conversation with the Chancellor, 'I stated distinctly to him that, now that the question was in agitation, I should not hesitate to give my full support.' The objections of Fitzgibbon were undiminished: he 'entered fully and earnestly, but with perfect temper, on the subject, . . . but he concluded by saying, that if it was my intention to give support to the petition, there was no doubt of its being easily carried.' Fitzwilliam was confirmed in this opinion by an address which he had just received, from the pre-eminently Protestant Corporation of Londonderry, expressing their wish 'to see all Ireland united in one interest.'[1]

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 28, 1795. Cooke, who was strongly opposed to the measure, wrote about this time: 'Lord Shannon has declared against the attempt to give anything to the Catholics. I believe Lord Hillsborough has done the same. The Speaker holds his own language; but I never saw an instance that Government could not carry a single measure, if there was no general opposition, and of that I see no probability.' (Cooke to Westmorland, Jan. 23, 1795, *Westmorland Papers*.)

On February 10, he again wrote confidentially and very fully on the subject: the Catholic Committee were determined to bring on the question at once, and Fitzwilliam found that Lord Kenmare, and the other Catholic gentry who had seceded from the committee, were fully resolved to support it, and fully convinced that it was necessary to the security of the country that it should be speedily settled. 'This subject, therefore,' continued Fitzwilliam, 'is now before the public unavoidably in public discussion, and ought to be finally and conclusively settled.' 'Any distinction or difference [between the religions] that is suffered to exist, will not be simply the cause of disaffection and jealousy to the Catholics, but it will continue to be, what is much more mischievous, a cloak to the machinations of a very different nature of the factious and designing. If equality of rights between the Protestants and Catholics is dangerous, all the danger is already incurred by the Act of '93. . . . The body of the lower orders of the people in this country is, in three provinces out of four, composed altogether of Catholics, whilst, on the other hand, in the higher orders you find none but Protestants. The number of Catholics of this description is beneath calculation. To the class, therefore, in which Catholicism prevails, perfect equality is already granted. It remains now to consider whether the symbol of it shall be granted to or withheld from that class in which, to a moral certainty, they never can receive but the shadow. They are not capable of the reality on account of the circumstances I have just mentioned. It is therefore my earnest recommendation, that this point may no longer be a subject of eager contention and animosity, but that the peace, tranquillity, and harmony of the country may now be sealed and secured for ever. . . . We have occasion enough for having unanimity among the higher orders. We cannot depend upon

the affection and attachment of the lower. The whole united strength of the higher may be necessary to control and keep the lower in order. . . . We must unite the higher orders in our common cause. The time I believe propitious to the purpose; not a single petition against it to the House of Commons from any Protestant body, though the subject has already been six weeks in agitation. Individuals who dislike it, and who perhaps, from a desire of maintaining a line of consistency, may say a feeble word against it, I believe have no intention to defeat it, and this opinion they decidedly entertain, that if anything is to be done, the business should be completed, and the question closed for ever. . . . The Catholics having put the business into the hands of Grattan, I have desired him not to proceed in it before his plan has been first laid before the Cabinet in London, and his Majesty's pleasure taken on it. His plan is a short and simple one: a general repeal of all restrictive and disqualifying laws; and that done, a complete change in the oath of disqualification. . . . The great reason is, that the people may be made one people, one Christian people, binding themselves in one common cause by one civil oath. . . . It is upon the large principle of leaving not a point of distinction in rights and capacities between Protestants and Catholics, that I propose, as I do, that no reserve should be made, not even of the highest offices of the State, not even the seals nor the bench. To make the reserve, would be to leave a bone of contention. It would be leaving a splinter in the wound that would, . . . to a certainty, sooner or later, break out again. It would mar the great object of laying the question to rest for ever. It would frustrate that great desideratum at this critical juncture, unanimity and harmony among all the higher orders of the kingdom. Should any melancholy event happen, should we see an enemy landed upon our

shore, the safety of the kingdom depends upon that, and upon that only; such is the insubordination of the lower orders, such their disaffection, that nothing will control them, nothing retain them in their duty and allegiance, but the unanimity, harmony, and joint efforts of the better orders. . . . I trust you will endeavour to impress his Majesty with the extent of the mischief that may arise, that probably will, by any attempt on my part, as acting in his Government, to oppose or circumscribe the measure of favour to the Catholics.'[1]

Two days later he wrote: 'I despatched a messenger with my letter of the night before last, in hopes of obtaining an immediate answer to it, and an approbation of granting an equal participation of rights to Catholics, to *the full extent* of what is proposed. Nothing short of it will produce the desirable end of a perfect harmony and a hearty unanimity in the general cause. I press it the more, because I feel that it is not simply expedient but *necessary*, and it is further necessary that a most gracious and unequivocal support should be given on the part of Government, for two forcible reasons: first, that the measure may meet with no opposition, for nothing but the appearance of backwardness and reserve on the part of Government will raise an opposition; and the next is, that Government may recover the confidence and affection of the Catholics. . . . I think myself fully authorised to decide for myself on the subject, but still, considering the extent proposed, I am desirous to have the mode considered in England in the present stage, while I hope it is still within my reach to have it limited and modified before the Bill itself is introduced, and before the plan is yet known to the Catholics themselves. Leave for bringing in the Bill is moved to-day.'[2]

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[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Feb. 10, 1795. [2] Ibid. Feb. 12, 1795.

The condition of the country was at this time very remarkable. The Catholics all over Ireland were evidently thoroughly aroused, and their hopes were raised almost to the point of certainty. For some days a perpetual stream of petitions for relief had been pouring in from every quarter, and, although they were perfectly loyal and respectful in their tone, they clearly showed that a complete removal of religious disabilities must be carried if Catholic loyalty was to be retained. Above half a million of signatures are said to have been appended to the petitions for complete emancipation of the Catholics, which lay upon the table of the House of Commons.[1]

All classes of Catholics—the committee and the seceders, the Tories and the democrats—were on this question united, and never since 1782 had an expression of national will so genuine, so strong, and so unequivocal, been brought to the threshold of Parliament. On the other hand, the Protestants of Ireland as a body were perfectly ready to concede what was asked. An aristocratic faction, very powerful from its borough influence, disliked the measure as threatening their monopoly, but it was plain that they would not resist the determination of the Government. A furious sectarian spirit raged among the farmers and labourers in some counties of the North, but it found scarcely any echo in political life. The great mass of the Protestants were plainly convinced that the time had come for completing the Act of 1793. That Act had given the Catholic body the substance of power, but had left the badge of degradation and inferiority unremoved. It had granted power to the most ignorant, most turbulent, and most easily disaffected, and it had confirmed

[1] This is the statement of Dr. Hussey (Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 277).

the incapacities of a loyal and conservative gentry, whose influence over the lower classes of the community it was vitally important to maintain. The Protestant gentry of Ireland had many faults, but they were at this time remarkably free from religious bigotry,[1] and, unlike the English Ministers, they at least knew Ireland. They saw that the United Irishmen were successfully using the Catholic question as a lever for uprooting the masses from their old allegiance; that, under the influence of the democratic spirit, which the French Revolution had engendered, the ascendency of property, rank, and intelligence, was strained and weakened; that multitudes of ignorant and turbulent men were drifting away from their old moorings, and were beginning to follow new and dangerous leaders; that classes which had hitherto at worst been only lawless and riotous, were rapidly becoming steadily and systematically disaffected. The evil could only be met by at once depriving the agitator of his most formidable weapon, by conferring political power on men who were tolerably certain not to misuse it, by uniting the upper ranks of all denominations in support of the Constitution. There were doubtless many who wished that the Catholic question had never been raised, but such regrets were now very idle. A revolution of power had been made in 1793. A revolution of opinion, which was

[1] I have collected much evidence of this in former chapters. I may add one passage from Sir Richard Musgrave, which will appear singularly curious when it is remembered that the writer represented the extreme anti-Catholic spirit produced by the rebellion of 1798, and that he apparently approves of what he relates. 'The Roman Catholics of a parish frequently solicit Protestant gentlemen for ground to build chapels on, and I never heard of the request being refused; and in many cases they built them at their own expense. Whenever a Popish chapel is to be built by subscription, the Protestants never fail, when solicited, to contribute largely to it. (Musgrave's *Rebellions in Ireland*, 2nd edition, 1801, p. 635.)

much more formidable, had followed or accompanied it. The Catholics had become keenly sensible of their rights, their degradation, and their power. It remained for the Government to decide between a policy of concession, and a policy of resistance, which, in the excited state of Ireland, was almost certain to lead to bloodshed.

The former policy would have encountered no serious difficulty in Ireland. As we have already seen, the Chancellor, who was the ablest of all its opponents, admitted that it could easily be carried. When Grattan moved for leave to introduce the Bill into Parliament, Duigenan and Ogle were the sole opponents, and there was, as yet, not a single petition to Parliament, not a single address to the Lord Lieutenant, on the part of any Protestant body, against it.[1] There may be endless controversy about the effects that would have followed Catholic emancipation in 1795, and about the propriety of the conduct of Lord Fitzwilliam. One fact, however, is as certain as anything in Irish history—that if the Catholic question was not settled in 1795, rather than in 1829, it is the English Government, and the English Government alone, that was responsible for the delay.

It is necessary, in order to understand the sequel, to follow closely the dates of the correspondence, and on the most charitable supposition they certainly disclose, on the part of the English Ministers, a neglect of duty which is simply astounding. We have seen that, as early as January 8, Fitzwilliam had warned Portland that the Catholic question was in full agitation in the country, and that he found it would be impossible to

[1] 'Not a petition to the House of Commons, not an address to me, has yet come up against it [the Catholic Bill] on the part of any Protestant body; but, on the contrary, the fair construction of some of their addresses has been an approbation of the measure. I hope this favourable opportunity of making the people of Ireland one people, may not be lost.' (Fitzwilliam to Portland, Feb. 13, 1795.)

prevent it from being introduced in the ensuing session of Parliament. We have seen that, on January 15, he had informed Portland that the Catholic question had, in his opinion, become one of the most urgent and vital importance, that it was impossible to defer its solution without extreme danger to the country, that it would inevitably be one of the first measures introduced in the session of Parliament which was to open within a week, and that, if he did not receive peremptory instructions to the contrary, he would acquiesce in the Catholic claims. The English Government were thus fully apprised of the situation, of the opinion of the Lord Lieutenant, of the course which he meant to pursue, and of the supreme importance of an immediate decision. Yet for weeks they left him without the faintest clue to their opinion, or the smallest indication that they disapproved of his conduct or his intentions. On January 13, Portland acknowledged Fitzwilliam's letter of the 8th. He informed him that the King consented to the peerage for Wolfe, but he made absolutely no reference to the Catholic question. Fitzwilliam's letter of the 15th probably arrived in London on the 18th or 19th. It might have been supposed that Portland would not have lost a day in consulting with Pitt, and in sending instructions that might have arrived, if not before, at least very shortly after, the opening of the Irish Parliament, which was fixed for the 22nd. Yet after Fitzwilliam's letter of the 15th had been received, two, if not three, letters arrived in Dublin from the Secretary of State, without a word of instruction on the Catholic question, or the slightest intimation that Fitzwilliam had been acting upon it without sufficient caution and discretion.

The natural, and, it seems to me, the inevitable, inference drawn by Fitzwilliam from this strange silence, was that the Government did not dispute his judgment,

or intend to interfere with his policy. It was only on February 8 and 9, when Parliament had been sitting for nearly three weeks, when the extraordinary supplies had been voted, when the Catholic hopes were excited to the highest point, and when petitions for emancipation were pouring in from every part of Ireland, that a discordant note was struck. On the 9th, Pitt wrote to Fitzwilliam, expostulating with him on the dismissal of Beresford, and on the negotiations with Wolfe and Toler. The letter contained no allusion to the Catholic question, and it concluded with an apology for withdrawing his attention 'from the many important considerations of a different nature, to which all our minds ought to be directed.' By the same mail a letter arrived from Portland, dated on the preceding day, in which, for the first time, he expressed an opinion on the question which during a whole month had been pressed upon him by the Lord Lieutenant, as of the most vital and the most urgent consequence. He cautioned Fitzwilliam not to commit himself by 'engagements,' or even by 'encouraging language,' to giving his countenance to the immediate adoption of the measure. The deferring it, he added, would be 'the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it has been capable of receiving since the Revolution, or, at least, *since the Union*.' [1]

Fitzwilliam was greatly and not unnaturally irritated by these letters. In his reply to Pitt, after describing in a few words the extremely dangerous and disaffected state of the country, he expressed his surprise at the objections that were made to the dismissal of Beresford. Before leaving for Ireland, he said, he had told Pitt

[1] These two letters are not in the Record Office, and that of Portland, I believe, has never been printed. The substance and extracts, however, are given by Fitzwilliam in his *Second Letter to Lord Carlisle*. Lord Stanhope has printed Pitt's letter in his *Miscellanies*, pp. 19–23.

that he feared he must take that step, and Pitt had made no objection. He found that the influence of Beresford was so great as seriously to injure the Government if thrown against it, and it was quite necessary for him at this critical time to have subordinates on whom he could rely. As Beresford retained his full salary, and received an assurance that his family and connections should not be removed from 'any of their innumerable offices,' there was no hardship. Pitt must choose between him and Beresford. If English Ministers did not mean to support the King's representative in Ireland, the sooner they recalled him, the better.[1]

To Portland he wrote, lamenting in bitter terms that, while the urgency of the Catholic question appeared to those who were on the spot to increase from hour to hour, it appeared to English Ministers, who were at a distance, to grow less and less, and that he was now, for the first time since his arrival in Ireland, pressed to defer it to some future occasion. He positively refused to attempt it. 'All I have to add,' he wrote, 'is, that I will not be the person so to put it off on the part of Government. I will not be the person who, I verily believe, would by doing so, raise a flame in the country that nothing short of arms would be able to keep down.'[2]

In a second letter to Portland, marked 'secret and

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[1] Fitzwilliam to Pitt, Feb. 14, 1795.

[2] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Feb. 14. Writing soon afterwards to Carlisle, Fitzwilliam said: 'As to resisting altogether, I should have belied my own conviction, and betrayed my situation, if I did not represent, as I have repeatedly done, that it would not only defeat every hope I had formed for the general security and defence of the country, but be attended with a certainty of the most alarming and fatal consequences. Of this (as I have already observed to you), every day presented me with additional indisputable proofs. The alarm that has been universally spread by the rumour of the measures being to be resisted, the language of every person with whom I converse, even of the boldest of its former opposers, the resolutions and addresses from the

confidential,' he again justified his conduct towards Beresford, and he took a false step, which afterwards led him into much trouble. In addition, he said, to the dangerous power of Beresford, and the impossibility of relying on him, there was another reason which justified his dismissal. His conduct in the sale of a public lease under Lord Westmorland's Administration had left a serious imputation on his character, and extraordinary measures had been taken to baffle inquiry. It was in order to prevent this inquiry, he said, that Westmorland had brought the last session of Parliament to a sudden, unexpected, and premature close. The transaction has never been clearly elucidated, certainly never established, and it was wholly unnecessary, for the justification of Fitzwilliam, to refer to it.[1]

These letters from Fitzwilliam crossed two from Portland, which were both written on the 16th. The first, though marked 'private,' was intended to be shown if necessary. The second was for Lord Fitzwilliam alone. In the first letter the Lord Lieutenant is instructed to send a fuller enumeration of the arguments against, as well as in favour of, Catholic concession, and also the various estimates of the probable

City, echoed already from the cities of Cork, Londonderry, and the county of Kildare, and actually adopted through every part of the kingdom, the debates of these last days in the House of Commons—all these must prove to you, that my representations were at least nothing short of the truth.' (*Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 20.)

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Feb. 13, 1795. In his published letter to Lord Carlisle, Fitzwilliam, speaking of Beresford, said: 'I decided at once not to cloud the dawn of my Administration by leaving, in such power and authority, so much imputed malversation.' In consequence of these words a duel was arranged between Fitzwilliam and Beresford; but the combatants were interrupted on the field, and Fitzwilliam then made an apology. (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 111–120.) Fitzwilliam declared, in one of his letters to Portland, that there had been much scandalous jobbing in reversions in the last weeks of Lord Westmorland's Administration.

strength of the Catholics in the Irish House of Commons in case they were emancipated. Portland hopes that Fitzwilliam will act 'very deliberately' on the Catholic question, and he doubts the necessity for the proposed yeomanry cavalry, now that the Irish Parliament had voted a force of soldiers and militia amounting to no less than 40,000 men. He feared much the ultimate consequences of yielding. The last great concessions to the Catholics had not stopped demands, and was it likely that those now contemplated would be more efficacious? He hoped that the establishment of Catholic seminaries might do some good, and also that a provision 'might be made for their parochial clergy, by which they would in some degree be removed from the state of dependence in which they are kept by even the lowest orders of their parishioners, and that rank of the people would be proportionately relieved at the same time from some part of the burden of maintaining their clergy.' In this way, he trusted that all classes might be disposed to rely with confidence on the good intentions of the Government towards them.[1]

This letter evidently foreshadowed a course of policy altogether different from that which was contemplated in Ireland. In his second letter, which was long and elaborate, Portland entered in detail into his reasons for opposing the whole policy of Catholic emancipation. They are almost identical with those which had been urged a few years before by Lord Westmorland. The chief argument in favour of the Catholics was their superiority of numbers, but this argument was only too likely to overthrow both the parliamentary system and the ecclesiastical establishment now existing in Ireland. The most striking feature in the constitution of the Irish House of Commons, was the great number of

[1] Portland to Fitzwilliam, Feb. 16, 1795.

boroughs in which the right of election was vested in not more than twelve electors. These boroughs secured the Protestant ascendency; but was it in accordance with common sense and with human nature to suppose that, if the Catholics were admitted to Parliament on the plea of numbers, they would not use all their efforts to overthrow these oligarchical monopolies? With what better confidence could statesmen hope that the present Protestant establishment would be preserved? In every country the established religion must be that which is professed by those who are in possession of the civil government, and 'all the declarations, all the assurances, all the obligations and oaths that ever were or can be devised,' will fail to save a Protestant establishment if the dominant power in the civil government is transferred to Catholics. Then follows a passage which is peculiarly significant. 'I want to preserve the Protestant establishment in Church and State, and am willing and desirous to give the Catholics every right and every benefit which good subjects are entitled to, but I wish not to attempt it until I can be sure that the present establishment in Church and State are unquestionably secured, and that the participation to which I would admit the Catholics would be as little likely to be called in question.' The proposed yeomanry cavalry, being chiefly Catholic, would place the real power of the country in the hands of the enemies of the Church, and the tithe system, which was already disliked by so many Protestants, was not likely long to survive the admission of Catholics to the Legislature. 'In the attack on it,' indeed, 'there is but too much reason to apprehend the countenance and co-operation of one, at least, of our most able and best friends.'[1]

It was evident that the Government was completely

[1] Portland to Fitzwilliam, Feb. 16, 1795. The last sentence, no doubt, alludes to Grattan.

opposed to the measure which the Irish Catholics, with great reason, had believed to be almost certainly attained. Fitzwilliam perceived it plainly, but in one more long and earnest despatch he attempted to avert the calamity which he foresaw. Rightly or wrongly, the inference which he drew from the last despatch, and from a passage which I have cited [1] from the letter of the 8th, was that the English Government desired to delay the measure, in hopes of obtaining that legislative union [2] which had undoubtedly been for a long time in

[1] P. 289.

[2] In his *Second Letter to Carlisle*, Fitzwilliam quoted the passage from Portland's confidential letter of the 8th, for which he was much blamed. He afterwards said (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 113), that his letters to Carlisle were printed without his knowledge or consent. Pelham, commenting upon the quotation, wrote to Portland: 'The construction that is put by many people (though falsely, in my opinion), is, that the intention of his Majesty's Ministers was to keep the question of the Catholics alive and in suspense until a peace, and that then it was to be employed as the means of forming an union between the two countries. Whether the quotation was made with a view of sounding an alarm upon that subject, I will not pretend to say, but it is suspected by those who are unfriendly to Lord Fitzwilliam. . . . Hearing the subject discussed in society, I thought it right to mention it to the Lord Chancellor, who was convinced that great use would be made of it in Parliament, and seemed, I think, to entertain some suspicion of that being the real design of the British Cabinet. I did not think it necessary to discuss that point with him further than to say, that I was convinced your grace never intended to convey that idea; and that I was ready to say, that I never would be concerned in an Administration in Ireland that would attempt it. . . . He thought it would be very proper, in some general words, to express a determination "to support the Constitution as established in 1782, and still further assimilated to that of Great Britain by Acts that have since passed." These were the Chancellor's own words, which, I think, convey the idea of his Majesty's Ministers, that the Catholics should not be admitted to any share of legislative authority, and refute the notion of any sinister attempt to force an union.' (Pelham to Portland, March 30, 1795.) There is, as far as I know, no evidence that Portland, either in public or private, disclaimed the meaning which had been attached to his words.

their minds, and which Westmorland had assured them could only be accomplished by maintaining the division between Protestants and Catholics. 'I am at a loss,' he wrote, 'to conjecture what those benefits are which, it is expected, will accrue to the British Empire by deferring the consideration of this question. . . . Can it be in the contemplation of any man, that a state of disturbance or rebellion here will tend to the desirable end (which, I think, I discover to be alluded to in your letter) of an union between the two kingdoms? Doubtless the end is most desirable, and perhaps the safety of the two kingdoms may finally depend upon its attainment; but are the means risked such as are justifiable, or such as any man would wish to risk in hope of attaining the end? Through such a medium I look for an union, I am ready to grant, but it is not the union of Ireland with Great Britain, but with France. . . . But supposing the object may be thought attainable in the end by such means, still, it must be allowed to be at a distance, and must be admitted not to be a moral certainty. Who, then, will advise to be hunting after a distant and contingent good, at the evident and admitted price of a certain and immediate evil?'

He then proceeds to examine one by one the arguments against emancipation. It was said that it would lead to a Catholic ascendency, dangerous to property and to the whole constitution of the country. But what additional danger is to be apprehended from the admission of the higher orders, who in number and property must always be insignificant compared with the Protestants? If there is danger of this kind, it springs from the admission to power of the class which is at once numerous and ignorant, turbulent and poor, but that class is already admitted. 'Those to whom anything remains to be granted, have the same evils to dread from the misuse of those rights, and from the

subversion of law and establishment, as the Protestants. . . . I go further, and I say that should an union with Great Britain be necessary for Ireland in order that property may be preserved, they will call as loudly for it, and act as zealously towards its attainment, as the Protestants.' The only danger to be feared from the upper classes of Catholics is, that, if they are thrown into a state of disappointment, discontent, and irritation, they may possibly be induced to act more under the influence of passion than of enlightened self-interest.

The next argument is the danger to the Protestant Church. 'Its property, as well as the property of every other corporation, is fenced and guarded by the same laws that preserve the property, and the same opinions that preserve all settlements, and I venture to say that things never will be ripe for the subversion of the one till they are ripe for the subversion of the other. . . . Oaths and obligations enforced by law, and resting all their efficiency upon the respect for law, are the only security you can have either for property, the Protestant establishment, or the Protestant succession, and if ever they fall, they will fall together.'

'The third point is, I suppose, the jealousy and dissent of the Protestant body. From this quarter I do not see how any danger is to arise, and, forming my judgment upon the conversation of those I have talked with, and upon every other appearance, just as little, or indeed no difficulty to the question. I hear no expression of alarm. I receive no remonstrance from the Protestant corporate bodies, I perceive no stir among them; no preparations made to resist and defeat it by parliamentary or other petitions, though the subject has now been two whole months fairly in agitation. On the contrary, in the addresses presented to me from Protestant corporations, particularly from Londonderry and Waterford, very different sentiments from those of

jealousy and dissent are expressed. They mark approbation of the principle, and do not hesitate to declare that it is called for by the exigencies of the times, and anticipate the happiest consequences from its being carried into effect. But I desire not to be understood to convey that the approbation of the Protestants goes to the length that no individuals are to be found who still retain their ancient prejudices and old jealousies, but only that they are not sufficient in numbers to create the least difficulty about carrying the measure into effect.'

'I feel that I have personal weight and influence enough to carry it through without difficulty; and carrying it through, I am confident of uniting cordially in the defence of the country all its weight, property, and influence, if I may be allowed to except a certain description of Protestants whose views will never permit them to unite with the friends of a system that has such a share of monarchy and aristocracy in its composition as ours has. Of the real and hearty support of all other descriptions, I feel myself confident.' [1]

The appeal was a weighty one, but Fitzwilliam himself can have scarcely believed that it could be successful, and before it was written the decision of the ministers had been taken. In a tone which completely broke the private and political friendship that had long subsisted between them, Portland wrote to Fitzwilliam expressing his astonishment that, with the full assent of the Government, leave had been given by Parliament to introduce a Catholic Relief Bill. The Cabinet unanimously agreed that the matter must not be pressed on so quickly; that the arguments of both sides must be sent to England; that they could give no assent till the draft of the Bill was laid before them. They were astonished that

[1] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Feb. 20, 1795.

the Lord Lieutenant should have suffered a Bill of such magnitude to receive the countenance of Parliament, when it had not even been laid before the Cabinet of England. He had never been authorised to commit himself so far, and it was the earnest wish of ministers that the question should be deferred to the peace. 'In the plainest and most direct terms,' Fitzwilliam was now ordered to take the most effectual means in his power to prevent any further proceedings being taken on the Bill before the House, till the King's pleasure was signified.[1]

This letter has a plausible sound, and to those who have not followed the course of events with the necessary minuteness, the charge of having unduly pressed on the question, and committed the Government, may appear established. After the best consideration, however, I can give, I can see no other course which Fitzwilliam could have adopted. The agitation had acquired formidable dimensions before he arrived in Ireland. He lost no time in informing the Government most fully of its pressing character, and as early as January 15 he clearly told them that he would exercise the discretion which he had received when he was appointed, and would accede to the Catholic demands, unless he received peremptory instructions to the contrary. The Government sent him no such instructions, though the Catholic movement was acquiring almost hourly additional strength: they pronounced no hostile opinion, when they had been emphatically told that, in the judgment of those who were responsible for the government of Ireland, the rejection or postponement of the measure would probably throw the country into a flame of rebellion; they never proposed that the meeting of Parliament, which was appointed for January 22, should

[1] Portland to Fitzwilliam, Feb. 18, 1795.

be deferred, and they suffered Fitzwilliam to meet that Parliament under the full impression that his representations of the state of the country had been accepted by the Cabinet. When Parliament met, it was totally impossible that the introduction of the Catholic question could have been prevented. The country was thrilling with the most passionate excitement on the subject. Even if Grattan had consented to relinquish it for the session, there were many members who were desirous of introducing it,[1] and in that case, as Lord Fitzwilliam truly said, 'the measure might come into hands with which neither he nor the King's Ministers had any connection, which would leave the Government only the disagreeable part of altering or modifying, if any alteration or modification had been thought necessary by the British Government, depriving his Majesty thereby of the whole grace and effect of what was done.'[2] The only possible way in which Fitzwilliam could have prevented the Bill coming before the House of Commons, would have been by openly opposing the leave to introduce it, and in that case he would have thrown himself into violent opposition to the whole current of excited Catholic feeling, would have precipitated the very evils of which he had warned the Government, and would have acted in direct contradiction, not only to his own sentiments, but to the instructions which he had received when he was appointed.

Under these circumstances, he had adopted the most judicious course in putting himself in connection with Grattan, who was not in office, who had been entrusted with the petition of the Catholic Committee, but who at the same time was in the close confidence of his Administration, and anxious to do all that was in his

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[1] *Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 18.

[2] See his protest in the House of Lords (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 206, 207).

power to smooth its path. As we have seen, Grattan consented to postpone introducing the measure till its leading provisions had been sent to England. As early as February 10, the Cabinet had been fully apprised of them, as well as of the opinion of the Irish Parliament upon them, in order that the English Government should be able to limit and modify the Bill if it appeared to them too unrestricted. When leave was given to introduce it, its terms were kept back from Parliament and from the Catholics until the opinion of the Cabinet had been received upon it, and they had not yet been communicated when the censure of the Cabinet arrived. If the measure was not sufficiently discussed, this was entirely the fault of the English Ministers, who had so strangely neglected it during the whole interval before Parliament met, and during the first fortnight of its session. If, with the usual ignorance of their class, they understood Ireland so little as to imagine that the question was one which might safely be indefinitely postponed, they had only themselves to blame, for nothing could be clearer or more emphatic than the warning they had received. The censure, therefore, which they sent to Fitzwilliam on February 18, appears to me perfectly unmerited. The next day the Cabinet agreed to recall Fitzwilliam, and on the 23rd he was directed to appoint lords justices to conduct the government till the arrival of his successor.

After all that has been written on the subject, a considerable obscurity still hangs over the real motives that induced the English Government to take a step which, they were repeatedly assured, must bring down upon Ireland a train of calamities of the most appalling description. The final opinion of Fitzwilliam, which was strongly shared by the Ponsonbys and by Grattan, was that the Catholic question had in reality nothing to say to their decision. The question they considered was

merely one of family influence. The great social and political weight of the Beresfords, supported by Westmorland, Buckingham, and Auckland in England, and by Fitzgibbon in Ireland, was strained to the utmost against the Ponsonbys, and the influence they brought to bear was such that, although Pitt was believed by Fitzwilliam to have acquiesced in the removal of Beresford when it was first proposed, he now determined at all hazards to resist it.

'Let my friends no longer suffer the Catholic question to be mentioned,' wrote Fitzwilliam, 'as entering in the most distant degree into the causes of my recall. . . . Had Mr. Beresford never been dismissed, . . . I should have remained.'[1] 'In my opinion,' said George Ponsonby, 'the Catholic question had no more to do with the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam than Lord Macartney's embassy to China. Lord Fitzwilliam was to be recalled, and this was considered the most popular pretext for the measure.'[2] The ministers, said Grattan, 'excited a domestic fever at the hazard of the general interest, for no object, or for an object too despicable or too criminal to be mentioned.'[3]

The arguments in support of this grave charge are very strong. The fact that, before Fitzwilliam went to Ireland, both Pitt and Portland professed themselves in principle favourable to Catholic emancipation; the discretion they had given to Fitzwilliam to support the measure if he believed it to be necessary; the complete silence with which week after week they received his representations that it could not be deferred, and that he intended, unless he received directions to the contrary, to accept it; the manner in which he was permitted to meet a Parliament, which must necessarily

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[1] *Second Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 22.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 175.

[3] Ibid. p. 192.

have been mainly occupied with this very question, without any instructions to oppose or to discountenance it—all these things form a chain of evidence which it is difficult, if not impossible, to resist. In the letters of Portland, the Catholic question is given the first place, and it is probable that it had a real if not the chief influence over his mind; but the earliest intimation Fitzwilliam received that English Ministers were discontented with him, was a private letter, written on February 2, by Windham to Lord Milton, stating that Pitt was displeased at the removal of Beresford, though the Duke of Portland appears not yet to have been aware of that fact.[1] Pitt is said to have described the dismissal as 'an open breach of a most solemn promise.'[2] His letter to Fitzwilliam of the 9th was wholly occupied with the Beresford question, and the negotiations relating to Wolfe and Toler; and when Fitzwilliam in his reply said that Pitt must choose between Beresford and his Lord Lieutenant, Pitt accepted the challenge on that issue. In a letter of February 21, he stated, it is true, that he concurred with the general desire of the Cabinet, that Grattan's Bill should not be allowed to make any further progress, and that the Cabinet 'should receive and consider the information which they thought it their duty to call for;' but he places the dismissal of Lord Fitzwilliam mainly upon the ground of the removal of former supporters of the Government, which he stated himself bound to resist, 'from a regard to the King's service and to his own honour.'[3] The Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, wrote to Grattan concerning the trouble that had arisen, and this letter does not contain a word about the Catholics,

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[1] *Second Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 12.

[2] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. p. 301; *Second Letter to Lord Carlisle*, p. 23.

[3] *Letter to Lord Carlisle.*

but is exclusively occupied with the dismissal of Beresford.[1]

'A certain family cabal,' wrote Burke, 'are in the sole possession of the ear of Government.'[2] Pitt was surrounded by followers who hated his new Whig allies. He was himself, directly or indirectly, in constant intercourse with the leading supporters of monopoly in Ireland, and with the last two Lords Lieutenant, both of whom were violently hostile to Lord Fitzwilliam and his system. It is not difficult to understand the kind of arguments that may have influenced him. Fitzgibbon had been his most powerful and unflinching Irish supporter during the evil days of the Regency debates. Beresford had taken a considerable, if not a prominent, part in framing the commercial propositions of 1785. Cooke had been appointed to his present office by the brother of Pitt's favourite colleague, Lord Grenville. Hamilton had served for nearly fifty years in the Government of Ireland. The powers possessed by Lord Fitzwilliam when he went to Ireland were only described by word of mouth, through the intervention of the Duke of Portland, and grave misunderstandings had arisen. It was clearly understood, indeed, on both sides, that Fitzgibbon was not to be removed, and that there was not to be any complete change of men, though room was to be made for the introduction of the

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 197, 198.

[2] Ibid. p. 202. Just after Lord Fitzwilliam's recall, Pelham, the secretary of his successor, wrote to Portland about the unpopularity of the Beresfords. He said: 'If any sacrifices are necessary (which, you know, I never admit *à priori* in politics), Pitt must submit to Beresford's removal. I am sorry to say . . . that Pitt seems more animated about men on this occasion than he ought to be; I am by no means satisfied with his conduct about Beresford, when I met him at his house with Lord Camden. I very much wished to have seen Lord Grenville upon that subject before I left London.' (Pelham to Portland, March 22, 1795.)

Ponsonbys into the Government; but Fitzwilliam contended that he had full power of pensioning off officials in confidential positions who were notoriously in opposition to his policy and his appointment, and that such a power was absolutely indispensable to the efficiency of his Administration. He urged that it was possessed and exercised, in their respective departments in England, by the other members of the Whig party who joined the Administration, though in England it was far less necessary than in Ireland, and he declared that he had obtained in England the tacit assent of Pitt to the probable necessity of the removal of Beresford.

Pitt, on the other hand, understood that no important change of men or measures was to be effected without previous communication with the English Cabinet, and that no old servants of the Crown were to be removed contrary to their wish, unless they had entered into a course of insubordination or opposition to the Government. But Fitzwilliam had not been more than two days in Ireland when he removed Beresford, peremptorily and curtly, and it seemed probable that the changes which were proposed or effected would amount to a most serious displacement of power in the permanent administration of Ireland. Appeals were made to Pitt, by men who had great weight with his party, 'to hold up a shield for the shelter of persons who had merited the favour of the last Lord Lieutenant by their services, and on whose conduct no blame or censure had been attached;[1] and they were accom-

[1] The very active part which Buckingham (who was Lord Grenville's brother), Westmorland, and Auckland took at this crisis, the constant letters of Beresford, Cooke, and Fitzgibbon against the Administration of Lord Fitzwilliam, and the great jealousy with which the old Tories looked upon their Whig allies, will be evident to anyone who compares Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets of George III.* vol. ii.; the *Auckland Correspondence*; the *Beresford Correspondence*; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*; and the

panied by the most alarming pictures of the dangerous fermentation which the measures of Lord Fitzwilliam were producing in Ireland.

Other political motives, which I have already indicated, very probably blended in his mind with these considerations. He was told that if the Ponsonbys, who were usually connected with the Whigs, obtained a real ascendency in Ireland, the whole department of Irish influence and patronage would pass into Whig hands. He may have believed that the easiest and safest way of governing Ireland was through that system of family monopoly which enabled the Government to count at all times, and amid all political changes, upon a subservient majority in the House of Commons. He shared the prevailing sentiment in England, that in the agonies of a revolutionary war, all great political changes should be as far as possible avoided or postponed, and he may have foreseen that if Grattan and Ponsonby carried the promised reforms, and gave a comparatively popular character to the Parliament of Ireland, the whole system of its past government would be infallibly destroyed, and the chances of obtaining a legislative union indefinitely diminished.

These were probably leading motives in producing the recall, but I do not think that the Catholic question was as completely foreign to it as the viceroy supposed. As far as 'the Irish clique' were concerned, it is probable that Burke did not greatly misjudge them when he wrote that their one object was 'to derive security to their own jobbish power. This is the first and the last in the piece. The Catholic question is a mere pretence.'[1] They employed it most skilfully for their purpose, and Fitzgibbon deserves to be remembered in

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Westmorland (or, as it is now called, *Fane*) *Correspondence* in the I.S.P.O.

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 204.

history as probably the first very considerable man who maintained the doctrine that the King would violate the coronation oath, the Act of Settlement, and the Act of Union with Scotland, if he consented to a measure allowing the Catholic electors to send Catholic representatives into Parliament.[1] Even the English Chancellor, he wrote, would 'stake his head' if he affixed the Great Seal of England to such a measure.[2] No more extravagant doctrine has ever been maintained by a responsible statesman, but it fell upon a soil which was prepared for its reception, and it has had a great and most fatal influence on English history.

Even before Fitzgibbon had written to this effect, the King had declared his emphatic hostility to Catholic emancipation, and drawn up an elaborate memorandum

[1] I have noticed (*History of England*, iv. 294, 295) how the doctrine that the Scotch Union and the coronation oath precluded the King from assenting to any law modifying the ecclesiastical establishments, appeared in the English Parliament in 1772. In the *Westmorland Papers* there is an argument, drawn up by the Archbishop of Cashel, against the abolition of the remaining restrictions on Catholics, based on the same grounds. It is undated, but was probably written during Lord Westmorland's struggle with the English Cabinet about the measures in favour of the Catholics then contemplated, for it states that, 'It is notorious that at least nineteen-twentieths of the Protestants of Ireland are utterly averse from the Popery Bill now in agitation,' which could hardly have been said by the most violent partisan, and certainly not with the faintest colour of plausibility, in 1795.

[2] See two remarkable letters in the *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 70–76. He says: 'The only Acts which now affect Irish Papists are the Act of Supremacy and Uniformity, the Test Act, and the Bill of Rights. The King cannot give his assent to a repeal of any of these without a direct breach of his coronation oath. . . . Whenever Mr. Grattan brings in his Bill—and it is printed—I mean to send it over to England, with comments in reference to British statutes which certainly bind the King upon this subject. In their Bill for establishing Papist colleges, they will find the same difficulties, if they do not take more precautions than they are capable of.' It will be observed in these letters, that Fitzgibbon suggests no doubt whatever, that the Irish Parliament would carry the Bills.

in opposition to it. It was dated on February 6, and in it the King mentioned that it was only on the preceding day that he heard, to his great astonishment, that Fitzwilliam had proposed a total and immediate change of the system of government which had been followed in Ireland since the Revolution. The admission of Catholics to sit in Parliament, and the formation in Ireland of a yeomanry which would be essentially Catholic, were measures which, in the opinion of the King, could not fail, sooner or later, to separate the two kingdoms, or lead England into a line of conduct which it was the very object of the English Revolution and of the Act of Settlement to prevent. Such a measure, the King continued, was beyond the decision of a cabinet of ministers; even if they favoured it, 'it would be highly dangerous, without previous concert with the leading men of every order in the State, to send any encouragement to the Lord Lieutenant on this subject; and if received with the same suspicion I do (*sic*), I am certain it would be safer even to change the new administration in Ireland, if its continuance depends on the success of this proposal, than to prolong its existence on grounds that must sooner or later ruin one, if not both kingdoms.'[1]

It is obvious what a formidable obstacle the attitude of the King threw in the way of Fitzwilliam; and while the King was in this state of mind, Fitzgibbon's views about the coronation oath were communicated to him by Lord Westmorland.[2] He readily embraced them, and he ever after employed them as the best reason or pretext for resistance.

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[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 304; appendix, xxiii–xxv.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 303. We shall have additional evidence of this communication in the next chapter. Westmorland, in the debates on May 8, adopted precisely the argument of Fitzgibbon against Catholic emancipation. (*Parl. Hist.* xxxi. 1511.)

I have referred to a memorandum, giving the case of the ministers against Fitzwilliam, which was drawn up by Grenville, corrected by Pitt, and afterwards sent to the other leading ministers for their approval. It relates the history of the transaction much as I have told it, but with some further details relating to the disputes about patronage. It mentions that when the coalition had been formed in England in July 1794, the government of Ireland was destined for Lord Fitzwilliam as soon as a sufficient post could be found for Lord Westmorland; that the intention had been prematurely divulged, and a notion got abroad that an entire change of the system of Irish government, both as to men and measures, was contemplated, and that this suspicion was much confirmed when it was found that Fitzwilliam intended to remove Fitzgibbon. It adds, that explanations took place in which it was clearly settled that Fitzgibbon should not be removed, and an explicit assurance was given by Fitzwilliam, 'that he had not in view the establishment of any new system in Ireland, but that he was desirous of strengthening his Government by the accession of Mr. Ponsonby and his friends, and the support of Mr. Grattan.' Shortly before the departure of Fitzwilliam, a Cabinet meeting was held at Pitt's house to discuss doubtful or disputed points. In addition to Fitzwilliam and Pitt, Portland, Spencer, Grenville, and Windham were present. They discussed at great length many questions of patronage—the appointment of a Primate, and of a Provost for Trinity College, the posts to be given to the two Ponsonbys, the provision to be made for Wolfe and Toler, who were not to be removed unless such places were provided for them as there was just reason to believe they would have accepted under Westmorland. These points were easily settled, but more division arose upon the contention of Fitzwilliam that some of the new offices, especially in the revenue

board which had been established by Lord Buckinghamshire, and which had been so often and so severely condemned by Grattan, should be abolished. Pitt and Grenville said 'that they considered themselves parties to the measures of Lord Buckinghamshire in Ireland, and could not on that account, independently of other considerations, concur in any measure which would appear to reflect on him.' Fitzwilliam disowned any intention of making such a reflection, but he still thought that the revenue board ought to be remodelled and reduced. In discussing the question, however, they soon found that none of them understood the details, and it was finally determined that it must be adjourned till the arrival of Fitzwilliam in Ireland, and 'that after his explicit disavowal of all intention to introduce a new system, or to countenance imputations on the former Government, his colleagues would willingly leave it to him to consider the subject . . . desiring only that before any such measure was adopted, they might have an opportunity of deliberating upon it.' 'Nothing,' the memorandum continues, 'was intimated in this conversation of any idea of removing Mr. Beresford, nor was even his name mentioned by Lord Fitzwilliam, although the different means which might be adopted for lessening the number of the commissioners of the revenue board formed a part of what he stated on the subject of those boards.'

After discussion of these and of some less important points, the conversation passed to measures, and the conclusions may be stated in the words of the memorandum. 'It was understood that on all important subjects Lord F. should transmit all the information he could collect, with his opinion, to the King's servants here, and that he should do nothing to commit the King's Government in such cases without fresh instructions from hence. It is also distinctly recollected by some of

the persons present, that the Catholic question was particularly mentioned, though not discussed at much length; that no decided sentiment was expressed by anyone as to the line which it might be right ultimately to adopt; but that the same general principles before stated were considered as applying to this as well as to the other questions of importance, and that a strong opinion was stated that Lord Fitzwilliam should if possible prevent the agitation of the question at all during the present session.'[1]

This appears to have been the last conversation which took place between Fitzwilliam and the ministers before the former departed for Ireland. The memorandum corroborates in all essential points the evidence that has been already adduced, and it seems to me rather to strengthen the view, that the Catholic question had, in the minds of the ministers at least, only a secondary part in the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, though it is probable that the opposition of the King to that measure weighed considerably in the balance. Among the Pelham papers of this date, there is a very elaborate legal argument to prove that Catholic emancipation was essentially inconsistent with the Constitution and the coronation oath. It was evidently drawn up by a lawyer, and is probably a copy of a paper submitted by Fitzgibbon to the King. After a full and interesting historical survey of the chief English and Irish statutes relating to the connection between Church and State,

[1] This memorandum is dated March 1795. A copy with a statement of its origin is in the *Grenville MSS.* There is another copy in the *Pelham MSS.* In one of Pelham's first letters from Ireland, he says the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam was a fortunate event, for 'the notion of forming a popular administration had given such an encouragement to democracy, and so unhinged all the common machinery of government, that I really believe the business of Parliament would have stopped.' (Pelham to Windham, May 17, 1795.)

both before and after the Revolution, and an argument to prove that the Catholics, though freely admitted to the Irish Parliament before the Restoration, were excluded by the Act of Supremacy from the Parliament which sat from 1661 to 1666, the writer proceeds to argue that the legislation of the Revolution, and the clause in the Act of Union with Scotland providing that the Act of Uniformity, and all other Acts of Parliament then in force for the establishment and preservation of the Church of England, 'shall remain and be in full force for ever,' made Catholic emancipation a question beyond the competence of the Legislature to carry. 'It appears,' he writes, 'that the crown having been conferred at the Revolution under the express compact of maintaining a Protestant religion and Government, and the Irish Parliament having recognised that principle, a Bill to endanger the Protestant Government and religion could not, consistently with the Revolution, be entertained in the Irish Parliament, and that the King could not, consistently with the Declaration of Rights, his coronation oath, and the Act of Union, order the Great Seal to be put to such an Act, unless his Majesty should be thereto authorised by a special Act of Parliament. The Roman Catholic petitions demand the repeal of all penal and restrictive laws whatsoever. If this were agreed to, it would go to the repeal of the Act of Supremacy and Uniformity. It would go to the acknowledgment of the Papal jurisdiction, and would be, in fact, a reconciliation with the Church of Rome, to which the King could not agree consistently with the tenure of his crown. . . . It is my opinion that an Act of Parliament to capacitate any person to sit in either House of Parliament without making and subscribing the 'Declaration against Popery,' and 'taking the oaths of allegiance and supremacy,' would be a direct violation of the Constitution as established at the Revo-

lution, and a breach of the solemn contract then made between the King and the people, which contract every king and queen swears to preserve inviolate at his or her coronation, and which oath, I am of opinion, renders it the indispensable duty of such king to refuse his assent to any such Bill, should it pass through the two Houses of Parliament.'[1]

When the news arrived that the English Government had determined to recall Lord Fitzwilliam, and to dash to the ground the hopes which the Catholics had been given every reason to entertain, those who knew Ireland best foresaw nothing but ruin. Fitzwilliam himself predicted that the English Ministers must face 'almost

[1] Memorandum as to the Catholic claim to sit in Parliament, April 3, 1795; *Pelham MSS.* ('Miscellaneous Irish Papers'). This memorandum contains some curious information about the Act which was introduced by Yelverton, Grattan, and Fitzgibbon, immediately after the question of independence had been raised in 1782, in order to allay the doubts of those who feared that Irish titles to property derived under English Acts of Parliament, might be affected by the repudiation of the right of England to legislate for Ireland. 'The framers of this Bill merely proposed to quiet Irish titles, but Lord Auckland, then Chief Secretary, signified to them privately, that he could not answer for the Bill being returned from Great Britain, unless they should insert in it clauses for confirming such statutes as went to the connection of the two kingdoms; and the third of William III. [the Act which excluded Catholics from the Irish Parliament] was particularly mentioned at the time. Accordingly, after much reluctance, the Bill was extended in its provisions, and the following proviso was introduced: "And whereas a similarity of laws, manners, and customs must naturally conduce to strengthen and perpetuate that affection and harmony which do, and at all times ought to subsist between the people of Great Britain and Ireland"—and then the Bill enacts, that all such clauses and provisions contained in any statutes made in England as relate to the taking any oath or oaths, or making or subscribing any declaration or affirmation in this kingdom &c. shall be accepted, used, and executed in this kingdom according to the present tenor of the same respectively.' The whole of this memorandum (which is too long for me to quote in full) is well worthy of study.

the certainty of driving this kingdom into rebellion.'[1] Forbes, who was one of the most acute members of the Irish Parliament, wrote to a private friend: 'It is reported that Pitt intends to overturn the Irish Cabinet by rejecting Catholic claims. Should he pursue that line, . . . it will end in the total alienation of Ireland.'[2] The ablest English-speaking Catholic bishop of the time was Dr. Hussey, who was largely employed by the Government in negotiations with the Irish Catholics, and who was a constant correspondent of Burke. At the end of January, when the Catholic question seemed certain to triumph under the auspices of the English Government, he wrote to Burke, that he found the loyal spirit of the Irish Catholics so strongly roused, that he believed that there were not five of them in the kingdom worth 10*l.* who would not spill their blood to resist a French invasion. Three weeks later, when doubts about the policy of the Government had begun to circulate, he wrote very solemnly that the question of this Emancipation Bill involved another very awful one—whether the Cabinet 'mean to retain Ireland, or to abdicate it to a French Government, or to a revolutionary system of its own invention.' When the decision was taken, he wrote in absolute consternation: 'The disastrous news of Earl Fitzwilliam's recall is come, and Ireland is now on the brink of civil war.'[3] From a wholly different point on the political compass, Charlemont, who had been so firm and steady an opponent of the concession of political power to the Catholics, pronounced that in the existing state of Ireland the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam was 'utterly ruinous,' and he predicted that by next Christmas the mass of the people would probably be in the hands of the United Irishmen.[4]

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[1] *Letter to Lord Carlisle.*

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 197.

[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 268, 278, 282.

[4] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 347, 348.

The remarkable memoir on the history of the United Irishmen which was drawn up in 1798 by O'Connor, McNevin, and Emmet, fully confirms the judgment of Charlemont. 'Whatever progress,' they say, 'this united system had made among the Presbyterians of the North, it had, as we apprehend, made but little way among the Catholics throughout the kingdom, until after the recall of Earl Fitzwilliam.'[1]

It may not be out of place to add here the opinion of a great English statesman on the transaction. 'As to the Catholic Bill,' wrote Fox, 'it is not only right in principle, but, after all that was given to the Catholics two years ago, it seems little short of madness to dispute (and at such a time as this) about the very little which remains to be given them. To suppose it possible that, now they are electors, they will long submit to be ineligible to Parliament, appears to me to be absurd beyond measure, but common sense seems to be totally lost out of the councils of this devoted country.[2]

Never at any other period of Irish history had the recall of a Lord Lieutenant struck such consternation through the country. In Parliament, Sir Lawrence Parsons made himself the chief mouthpiece of the prevailing feeling. We have seen that, when the supplies were voted, this very able man had warned the Parliament, with a sagacity which the event only too fully justified, against excessive confidence in the English Cabinet, and had vainly tried to induce them to unite their grants with stipulations for redress of grievances. He had not forgotten that, only ten years before, large additional supplies were voted by the Parliament of Ireland, in response to the offer of the English Minister to grant free trade between England and Ireland, and

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[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 356.

[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, iii. 100, 101.

that, after those supplies had been granted, the commercial propositions were so mutilated that they were ultimately abandoned. On February 26 he rose to ask if the prevailing rumours of the recall of Fitzwilliam, and of the withdrawal of the concessions to the Catholics, were well founded. 'If those measures,' he said, 'were now to be relinquished which gentlemen had promised with so much confidence to the country, and on the faith of which the House had been called on to vote the enormous sum of one million seven hundred thousand pounds, he must consider this country as brought to the most awful and alarming crisis she had ever known in any period of her history.' [1]

On March 2, when the news was confirmed, he took the extreme step of moving a short supply Bill, prefacing his motion by a speech of great violence. 'The state of the kingdom,' he said, 'was most alarming. The people, under the auspices of their old friends, had been taught to expect measures which he feared would be shortly resisted. . . . The first he believed to be the Catholic Bill, and if a resistance to any one measure more than another was likely to promote dreadful consequences, it was this. He said nothing as to the original propriety of the measure, but this much he would say, that if the Irish Administration had countenanced the Catholics in this expectation without the concurrence of the British Cabinet, they had much to answer for. On the other hand, if the British Cabinet had held out an assent and had afterwards retracted—if the demon of darkness should come from the infernal regions upon earth and throw a firebrand amongst the people, he could not do more to promote mischief. The hopes of the public were raised, and in one instant they were blasted. If the House did not resent that insult to the nation and

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 133, 134.

to themselves, they would in his mind be most contemptible; for although a majority of the people might submit to have their rights withheld, they would never submit to be mocked in so barefaced a manner. The case was not as formerly, when all the Parliament of Ireland was against the Catholics, and to back them the force of England. Now, although the claim of the Catholics was well known and understood, not one petition controverting it had been presented from Protestants in any part of Ireland. No remonstrance appeared, no county meeting had been held. What was to be inferred from all this, but that the sentiments of the Protestants were for the emancipation of the Catholics? . . . Was the British Minister to control all the interest, talents, and inclinations of this country? He protested to God that, in all the history he had read, he had never met with a parallel of such ominous infatuation as that by which he appeared to be led. Let him persevere, and you must increase your army to myriads; every man must have five or six dragoons in his house. . . . The House had voted additional taxes in the present session to the amount of 250,000*l.* . . . This was a charge of 6,000*l.* a year upon every county in Ireland, over and above all other taxes. Such a sum would never have been voted, without a dissenting voice, in support of a calamitous war, if Ireland had not been deceived either here or in the British Cabinet; he was inclined to suspect the latter.'[1]

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 137–141. So Fitzwilliam wrote: 'I have had the good fortune not only to obtain larger and more considerable supplies . . . than were ever before granted in this kingdom; but I must and shall have the additional boast of laying at the feet of his Majesty, on the part of his zealous and faithful subjects of Ireland, a most munificent aid for the general defence of his Empire—an aid large beyond any example. I have the pride further to say, that all this has been effected, in its progress thus far, with a degree of harmony, cordiality, and unanimity

The proposal of a short money Bill was, however, easily defeated, and Grattan concurred with Lord Milton in persuading Conolly to withdraw a resolution protesting against the prorogation of Parliament before the grievance complained of was redressed. The House contented itself with voting unanimously, that the viceroy had merited the thanks of the House and the confidence of the people. When Lord Fitzwilliam had left Ireland, there were debates on his recall both in the English and Irish Parliaments, but the Government refused all detailed explanations, and entrenched themselves behind the undoubted prerogative of the King to recall his representatives. In a long protest which was placed on the books of the House of Lords by Fitzwilliam and Lord Ponsonby, the chief facts of the case were clearly stated, and Fitzwilliam once more gave his emphatic testimony to the condition of Irish opinion on the Catholic question. 'He found the relief,' he said, 'to be ardently desired by the Catholics, to be asked for by very many Protestants, and to be cheerfully acquiesced in by almost all.'[1]

Lord Camden was appointed successor to Fitzwilliam, with Mr. Pelham as Secretary. Pelham had already held this position during Temple's short Administration in 1783 and 1784. His health was now much broken, but he resumed the office at the urgent request of Portland, and with the warm approbation of Fitzgibbon.[2]

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scarcely ever before experienced, and never under circumstances similar to those in which I found the country.' (Fitzwilliam to Portland, Feb. 28, 1795.) It was 'no proof of wisdom nor generosity,' wrote Grattan, 'when this country came forward, cordial and confident, with the offering of her treasure and blood, and resolute to stand or fall with the British nation, . . . to select that moment to dash away her affection . . . and to plant a dagger in her heart.' (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 220.)

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxi. 1527.

[2] When the report that the Secretaryship had been offered to Pelham, arrived in Ireland,

The interval between the announcement of the recall, and the arrival, of Camden was a very anxious one. A great meeting of the Catholics, summoned by the Catholic Committee, was held in Dublin, to petition the King that Parliament should not be prorogued till the Catholic question had been settled, and a petition for the continuance of Fitzwilliam in office was taken by delegates to London. Meetings of Protestant freeholders and freemen of Dublin, and of the merchants and traders, with a governor of the Bank of Ireland at their head, were held for the same purpose, and they expressed their entire concurrence in the removal of religious disabilities. Kildare, Wexford, Antrim, Londonderry, and other counties followed the example, while addresses from numerous counties and corporations, and from the students of Trinity College, were presented to Fitzwilliam and Grattan.[1]

The delegates sent on the part of the Catholics to London, to petition the King to continue Lord Fitzwilliam in office, were graciously received, but obtained no answer; and shortly after their return, the Catholic Committee convened another great and very important meeting. Its resolutions expressed the regret of the Catholics at the removal of Lord Fitzwilliam, 'contrary to the unanimous wish of the whole people;' their

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Fitzgibbon wrote to him: 'If such an application is made to you, for God's sake do not form your opinion of the state of this country from newspaper exaggeration. Believe me, that firmness and moderation on the part of English Government will very soon re-establish tranquillity in Ireland; and I do not know a man who could come here that would be so likely to succeed in composing the country as you. Be assured that, if you will come to us, you will have an opportunity of doing essential service to both countries, and acquiring a solid and permanent political character.' (Fitzgibbon to Pelham, March 12, 1795, *Pelham MSS.*)

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 215–224; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 92–95; Plowden, ii. 503, 504.

consolation 'in contemplating the rising spirit of harmony and co-operation among all sects and descriptions of Irishmen, so rapidly accelerated by that event;' their earnest wish that the Catholics of Ireland should 'cultivate by all possible means the friendship and affection of their Protestant brethren,' and their desire that Grattan should reintroduce the Catholic Bill in the next session of Parliament. The two memorable passages I have already cited from the letters of the English Minister, pointing, as was universally believed, to the desire of Government to postpone the Catholic question, with the object of effecting a legislative union, were then read, and this great and representative Catholic meeting proceeded to pass, without a single dissentient voice, the following resolutions: 'That we are sincerely and unalterably attached to the rights, liberties, and independence of our native country; and we pledge ourselves collectively and individually to resist even our own emancipation, if proposed to be conceded upon the ignominious terms of an acquiescence in the fatal measure of an union with the sister kingdom. That, while we make this undisguised declaration of our sentiments, in order to satisfy the public mind, we are of opinion that a measure so full of violence and ruin will never be hazarded; convinced as we are that no set of men will arrogate to themselves a power which is contrary to the ends and purposes of all government—a power to surrender the liberties of their country, and to seal the slavery of future generations.'[1]

The publication of the letters to Lord Carlisle, and especially of the confidential passage from Portland's despatch referred to in the foregoing resolutions, undoubtedly added largely to the dangerous excitement,

[1] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 133–135.

and it is not, I think, possible to justify it. The mind of the Lord Lieutenant was evidently in a state of morbid irritation, which was probably greatly aggravated by the fact that he had received no support from his Whig colleagues in the ministry; and though he disclaimed the publication, these letters appear to have been widely distributed with his sanction.[1] A singularly curious letter, written on the day of his departure, to Westmorland by the Chancellor, shows vividly the indignation this publication had produced, and at the same time casts some light on the meaning of the Duke of Portland's words. After describing the departure of the Lord Lieutenant, Fitzgibbon proceeds: 'So much malignity and folly and falsehood, and such notorious violation of public trust and private faith, never have been exhibited by any man to whom the management of a great kingdom was committed, as this infatuated man has manifested in these letters to his friend, Lord Carlisle. In one of these, your lordship will see, he has published a very serious and important passage in a private and confidential despatch, as he candidly states it to be, which he had received from the Duke of Portland—a passage intimating broadly his opinion, that if the Catholic claims could be postponed for consideration till there should be a peace, they might induce the Protestants of Ireland to consent to an union with the Parliament of England. I do most strongly suspect that this idea was drawn out from the Duke of Portland, by Lord Fitzwilliam's representation of a conversation which I had with him upon the subject of his Popish projects, in which I stated to him distinctly my opinion that an union with the Parliament of England was the only measure which could give Great Britain a chance of preserving this

[1] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 88, 89, 118.

country as a member of the Empire. I told him, however, that till Great Britain was at peace, and we had a strong army in Ireland, it would be impossible to carry such a measure, however necessary it might be. He told me, more than a month since, that he had reported my opinions on this subject to the British Government.'[1]

The signs of disaffection were so menacing, that Fitzwilliam, who desired immediately to leave Ireland, was obliged, at the urgent request of the leading members of the Irish Government, to postpone his departure for a fortnight, as it was represented to him that the country would not be safe in the weak hands of the lords justices, till his successor arrived.[2] He at first peremptorily refused to adjourn the Parliament; but Fitzgibbon declared that unless such an adjournment took place, he would not be responsible for twenty-four hours, for the government of Ireland.[3] The twenty-fifth of March, when he sailed for England, was one of the saddest days ever known in Ireland. The shops of Dublin were shut. All business was suspended. Signs of mourning were exhibited on every side. The coach of the Lord Lieutenant was drawn by some of the most respectable citizens to the waterside, and the shadow of coming calamity cast its gloom upon every countenance. It was indeed but too well justified. From that time the spirit of sullen and virulent disloyalty overspread the

[1] Fitzgibbon to Westmorland, March 25, 1795 (I.S.P.O.).

[2] Fitzwilliam to Portland, Mar. 7; Fitzgibbon to Westmorland, March 7, 1795. Fitzgibbon says that he himself, with the Primate and the Speaker, told Fitzwilliam that the state of the country was too dangerous for him to leave it till his successor arrived. On receiving a written opinion from Fitzgibbon to that effect, he consented to delay his departure.

[3] Fitzgibbon to Westmorland, March 25, 1795. The Speaker, the Primate, and Pelham (who had just arrived) supported Fitzgibbon, and the Parliament was accordingly adjourned to April 13.

land, 'creeping,' in the words of Grattan, 'like the mist at the heels of the countryman.'

It has been strongly maintained by some modern English writers, that the importance of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam in Irish history has been greatly overrated. That some exaggeration mingled with the first excited judgments on the subject, is no doubt true, and something of it may have passed into later history. Long before the arrival of Lord Fitzwilliam, some of the most active members of the Catholic Committee were in full sympathy with Wolfe Tone, and in large districts of Ireland the Defender movement had drawn great bodies of the Catholic peasantry into an armed organisation, aiming at Whiteboy objects, but already looking forward to French assistance and invasion as the means of attaining them. No one can read the letters of Westmorland, and especially of Fitzwilliam, without perceiving that the condition of Ireland was very serious, and that the danger would have been extreme if a French army had succeeded in establishing itself firmly on the soil, and had promised the abolition of tithes and the subversion of the existing system of landed property. Lawlessness, ignorance, extreme poverty, and a complete separation in character and sentiment of the Catholic tenantry in a great part of Ireland from the owners of the soil, were evils on which Catholic emancipation could have had little direct influence, though national education, and, still more, a commutation of tithes, might have done much to mitigate them. Under any circumstances, the condition of Ireland in the last years of the eighteenth century must have been exceedingly dangerous. Nothing disorganises and demoralises a country in which there are great internal elements of disorder, so certainly as a constant menace of invasion, prolonged through many years; and the situation was enormously aggravated by the fact,

that the probable invaders were the soldiers of a great and contagious Revolution, whose first object was to set the poor against the rich, to sweep away established churches, and to destroy the whole existing distribution of property and power. Ireland was full of sympathisers with this Revolution, and no moderate reform would have contented them. Whether the introduction of a few Catholic gentry into the Legislature, and the moral effect of the abolition of religious disabilities, would have enabled Ireland successfully to meet the storm, is a question which may be easily asked, but which no wise man will confidently answer.

It appears to me, however, undoubtedly true, that the chances were immensely diminished by the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam. Great classes who were as yet very slightly disaffected, now passed rapidly into republicanism, and Catholic opinion, which had been raised to the highest point of excited hope, experienced a complete, a sudden, and a most dangerous revulsion. The recall of Fitzwilliam may be justly regarded as a fatal turning point in Irish history. For at least fifteen years before it occurred, the country, in spite of many abuses and disturbances, had been steadily and incontestably improving. Religious animosities appeared to have almost died away. Material prosperity was advancing with an unprecedented rapidity. The Constitution in many important respects had been ameliorated, and the lines of religious disabilities were fast disappearing from the statute book. The contagion of the French Revolution had produced dangerous organisations in the North, and a vague restlessness through the other provinces, but up to this time it does not appear to have seriously affected the great body of Catholics, and Burke was probably warranted when, in estimating the advantages which England possessed in her struggle with France, he gave a pro-

minent place to the loyalty, the power, and the opulence of Ireland.[1] With the removal of the few remaining religious disabilities, a settlement of tithes, and a moderate reform of Parliament, it seemed still probable that Ireland, under the guidance of her resident gentry, might have contributed at least as much as Scotland to the prosperity of the Empire. But from the day when Pitt recalled Lord Fitzwilliam, the course of her history was changed. Intense and growing hatred of England, revived religious and class animosities, a savage rebellion savagely repressed, a legislative union prematurely and corruptly carried, mark the closing years of the eighteenth century, and after ninety years of direct British government, the condition of Ireland is universally recognised as the chief scandal and the chief weakness of the Empire.

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[1] *First Letter on a Regicide Peace.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Lord Camden arrived in Ireland on March 31, 1795. His Chief Secretary, Pelham, had been already there for some days, and the state of the country was so evidently dangerous, that there were great fears for the safety of the viceroy on his entry into Dublin. In consequence, it is said, of secret information furnished by Francis Higgins, the proprietor of the 'Freeman's Journal,' the arrangements for the entry were at the last moment changed, and it was deemed a matter of no small congratulation that the procession passed almost unmolested through the streets. When Lord Fitzgibbon and the Primate were returning from the Castle, their carriages were attacked by a furious mob, and the Chancellor, who was especially obnoxious to the popular party, was wounded by a stone, which struck him upon the forehead. The riot rapidly spread. The mob attacked the custom-house, and the houses of the Chancellor, the Primate, the Speaker, and Beresford. It was found necessary to call out the soldiers, and two men were killed.

It was an ill-omened beginning of a disastrous vice-royalty. On the day when Grattan, who was regarded as the mouthpiece of the Government of Lord Fitz-william, obtained leave to bring in a Bill for Catholic emancipation, the loyalty of the Catholic population seemed to rise higher than it had ever risen since the Revolution, and it was believed that the policy of religious disqualification was for ever at an end. On

the day when the English Government disavowed the acts of its Irish representatives, recalled Lord Fitzwilliam, and again brought to the helm the most violent opponents of the Catholics, a cloud seemed to fall on the spirit of the nation which has never been removed. Just before the arrival of Camden, Pelham wrote to England that he had received very alarming accounts of the proceedings of the Catholic Committee. A select and secret committee, consisting of a very few, and entrusted with a larger power, was forming, and they were to be bound by an oath of secrecy and perseverance. 'It is said,' he continued, 'that upon a closer investigation of their strength and influence, upon the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, they [the Catholic Committee] are led to despair of anything effectual without the assistance of the French, and it is seriously in their contemplation to send an embassy to Paris, if the Catholic question should be lost in the Irish Parliament.'[1]

The replies of Grattan to the numerous addresses presented to him were eagerly scanned. They were marked by a great deal of that strained and exaggerated mannerism of expression which was habitual to him, and they speak in no doubtful tones of his indignation at what had occurred; but they were, at the same time, in substance eminently moderate, and evidently intended to maintain the Catholics in their allegiance. Their true policy, he told them, was to maintain strictly their union with Protestants, and to press on their claims steadily within the lines of the Constitution. 'Your emancipation will pass,' he said, 'rely on it, your emancipation must pass; it may be death to one viceroy; it will be the peace-offering of another, and the laurel may be torn from the dead brow of one governor to be

[1] Pelham to Portland, March 30, 1795.

craftily converted into the olive for his successor.' If, however, the old 'taskmasters' and the old system of government were restored, he predicted that they would 'extinguish this country.' He asserted that the public measures of the late Administration, and especially that which was now disputed, had been stipulated and agreed to, and he pledged himself to bring in the Emancipation Bill of which he had given notice. Language was employed, which excited much alarm among the English Ministers, about the independence of the Irish Cabinet as a body responsible directly to the King, and not a mere subordinate department of the English Ministry.

It had been one of the great misfortunes of the English Government that, during a considerable period of its history, it had been either compelled or persuaded to adopt as its method of managing Ireland, the worst of all expedients, that of endeavouring to inflame the animosities and deepen the divisions between the Protestants and Catholics. This was the policy of Cromwell, and it was the policy which was systematically pursued for a long period after the Revolution. The exclusion of Catholics by an English Act from the Irish Parliament; the lament of Bishop Burnet that the division of Whig and Tory was beginning to appear in a country where the sole divisions had hitherto been those between Protestants and Papists;[1] the habitual employment by the governors of Ireland, in the early years of the eighteenth century, of the terms 'common enemy' and 'domestic enemies' when speaking of the Roman Catholics, clearly indicate a policy which was steadily carried out. For a long time, as we have already seen, this spirit had almost wholly passed away. The relations of the English Government to the Irish Catholics had become very friendly. The penal laws

[1] Burnet's *History of his Own Times*, ii. 360.

had for the most part fallen into desuetude before they had been formally abolished, and the influence of English Ministers had been usually exerted in favour of the Catholics. The declarations of the grand juries in 1792 against the admission of the Catholics to political power had, no doubt, been chiefly inspired by men who were high in office in Ireland, but this was at a time when the Irish Administration on this very question was endeavouring to defeat the tolerant views of the English Cabinet. On the accession of Lord Camden, however, a great and most pernicious change took place. The English Cabinet had determined to resist the emancipation of the Catholics, contrary to the dominant sentiments of the Irish Protestants, and it therefore directed its Irish representatives to endeavour to kindle an anti-Catholic feeling in Ireland, and exert its enormous influence to organise an Irish party of resistance.

The secret instructions to Lord Camden clearly indicate this intention. The policy, the Duke of Portland said, which Lord Fitzwilliam ought to have pursued, was to have prevented if possible the Catholic question from being agitated at all, and if this proved impossible, to have collected the opinions of all parties, on the subject, for the information of the ministers, and to have awaited their decision before committing himself in any way upon it. 'Although the business is far from being in the same state, the outline which I have to mark out for your lordship's conduct must be the same, as nearly as circumstances will admit.' The agitation of the question cannot now be prevented, but the Lord Lieutenant must endeavour to convince the most important persons, that the contemplated concessions must be either subversive of the Protestant establishment, or else wholly insignificant. He must do his utmost to rally the Protestant interest against the concessions. He must hold a firm and decided

language of hostility to them, but he must also tell the Protestants that, without their concurrence, the Government cannot effectually resist ; that, with their concurrence, the Government 'will be ready to make every exertion they can desire, to prevent the admission of Catholics to seats in the Legislature.'

Such instructions, in the existing state of Ireland, meant nothing less than a revival of the old religious warfare. They meant that, while the United Irishmen were seeking to obliterate the distinction between Protestant and Catholic, the English Government, in order to perpetuate a system of proscription, were endeavouring to make that distinction indelible, and to stimulate and manipulate Protestant jealousies. The extreme centralisation of Irish administration had placed most posts of influence and power in a few easily managed hands, and the whole machinery was to be worked in hostility to the Catholics. If Lord Camden was convinced that resistance would be dangerous or ineffectual, he must even then abstain from taking any step in favour of concession till he had received explicit instructions from England, and he must not suffer anyone connected with his Government to bring forward or to countenance any measure which had not been expressly sanctioned.

While, however, the Lord Lieutenant was directed to place himself at the head of the Protestant interest, and to adopt a policy of open, energetic, and uncompromising resistance to Catholic emancipation, he was also, as far as it could be done consistently with this course, to conciliate the Catholics, and for this purpose Portland suggested measures which had been already mentioned to Lord Fitzwilliam. These measures were, the establishment of seminaries for the education of priests, and a provision for the parochial clergy, by which they might be relieved from their present state

of dependence, and their parishioners from a portion of the burden to which they were subject. 'If beside these,' wrote the English Minister, 'any mode should occur to your lordship, by which the education of the lower ranks of the Catholics could be facilitated, so as to put them in that respect on a par with their Protestant brethren, your lordship may be sure of the fullest countenance and support of the Government.'

On the constitutional question, he speaks with no faltering accents. 'A notion has arisen within these few years, and has latterly but too generally prevailed, of the propriety of the existence of an Irish Cabinet. I therefore think it necessary to protest, and caution your lordship against it, in the strongest and most explicit terms, for to me it appears unconstitutional in the highest degree, and directly subversive of English government, and of the unity of the British Empire.' It would annihilate the responsibility of the Lord Lieutenant to the English Government, and would 'more immediately tend to the separation of the two countries, and the introduction of anarchy into Ireland, than any other means that could be devised.' [1]

In the confidential correspondence of Pelham, there are three letters, written at this time, which throw a considerable though casual light upon the feelings, motives, and divisions of the principal actors in this obscure period of political history. The first tells very plainly its own tale, and it is a tale of deep significance in Irish history. 'I cannot but inform you,' wrote Portland, 'for the purpose of putting you upon your guard, that we have learnt from the most unquestionable authority, that a correspondence has been carried on, or at least letters have been written by Lord Fitzgibbon to the King (to whom they have been delivered

[1] Portland to Camden, March 26, 1795.

by Lord Westmorland), with a view, and with more effect than could be wished, to prejudice his mind and *to alarm his conscience* against the concession to the Catholics. I don't know how *your friend* Pitt feels this, but if this is to be the practice, no Government can go on in Ireland, and I believe there are not two opinions in the *greatest part* of the Cabinet respecting it.'[1]

A second letter seems to me clearly to show, that Pitt was full of grave doubts and forebodings about the policy he was pursuing. Portland mentions, that he had been present at a meeting at Lord Grenville's, 'for the purpose of finally settling the minutes of the conversation which passed at Mr. Pitt's some time previous to Lord Fitzwilliam's departure.' 'I found Mr. Pitt and Mr. W. [Windham],' he says, 'full of apprehensions, and gloom. I communicated to them *both* your letters, revived their spirits, and created in them both a degree of confidence which I think even Pitt was much further from feeling at my entering the room, than I have almost ever observed upon any former occasion. He caught with some sort of avidity at the opinion expressed by the Chancellor and Speaker on the subject of the Catholic question, but soon abandoned it, on its being observed that some allowance was to be made in the weight of their opinions, for the known prejudices of the persons by whom they were given.' In the same letter the duke adds, that he had heard from Ireland, 'that the idea of Grattan's being sacrificed and made a scapegoat has been very generally and industriously circulated,' and he adds somewhat ambiguously, 'after what you tell me, I see Grattan is *not less an Irishman* than the rest of his countrymen.'[2]

A third letter shows the anxiety of at least one of the

[1] Portland to Pelham, March 21, 1795 (secret). The words in italics are underlined in the original.

[2] Portland to Pelham, March 28, 1795.

ablest members of the Cabinet to minimise, as much as possible, the effects of the change of Government in Ireland, and to prevent it from assuming, either in reality or in appearance, the character of a complete change of system. The writer was Windham. 'It is my earnest hope,' he wrote, 'that you will still be able to preserve a good intelligence with Grattan, and to satisfy him that both in respect to men and measures, except in the single point of an immediate and unlimited concession to the Catholics, Lord Camden's Government will be such as he will not feel it necessary to be in opposition to. You will then, I think, be of opinion that it is a debt due in justice to Grattan, not to suffer the consequences of his fairness and real regard for the public welfare to operate to his disadvantage, nor pass in the eyes of the world as a want of power, rather than as a want of will, to do mischief. I say this, because in the minds of some of our friends on this side of the water, justice is not done to him in that respect, nor sufficient credit given him—at least, as I have sometimes thought—for that forbearance which he manifested during all the latter period of Lord Westmorland's Administration. Few public men have, to my mind, given such an honourable proof of their willingness to sacrifice even their immediate political consequence—the last sacrifice that such men are in general willing to make—to the general interests of the country. . . . A steady hand held by Lord Camden between the two parties, with a turn even of the scale in favour of those newly ejected . . . joined to a pure and upright system of government, will, I am persuaded, disarm the hostile dispositions that may be at present felt, and place Mr. Grattan in a situation in which at worst he may think it sufficient to preserve a sort of armed truce. For my own part, I cannot bear the thought of being on any other terms with him, than those of confidence and co-

operation in the great cause to which he has shown himself so truly attached. . . . I should be sorry to have him suppose that anything that has passed, or anything that I am persuaded can pass, can . . . make me otherwise than ambitious of his friendship and good opinion.'[1]

It was decided that Parliament should meet without any Speech from the Throne, and that no explanation should be given of the passage from the confidential despatch cited by Fitzwilliam, which was generally interpreted as pointing to an union. The silence maintained by Portland on this subject, in private as well as in public, is a strong presumption that this interpretation was a correct one, and it is difficult on any other supposition to find any sufficient explanation for his conduct towards the Catholics and towards Fitzwilliam. Two or three passages from the first letters of Camden and Pelham, show that they were aware of the danger of the task they had undertaken, though they had great hopes of surmounting it. 'The quiet of the country depends upon the exertions of the friends of the established Government, backed by a strong military force.' 'I confess, I am more alarmed at the general want of attachment to Government, than at any consequences that may arise from any violent or bigoted attachment to religious opinions.' 'All will be quiet if there is no invasion, and if troops are immediately sent.' But reinforcements must on no account be delayed. Government could easily obtain enough parliamentary support to secure the rejection of the Catholic Bill, and the better Catholics have no wish to embarrass the Administration. The danger lies chiefly in 'the correspondences which persons of another description have established throughout the whole country. These per-

[1] Windham to Pelham, April 21, 1795.

sons are connected with, and directed by, the Society of United Irishmen, who, to promote their own views, have chosen that Catholic emancipation (as it is termed by them) should become the watchword of their party.'[1]

Parliament met on April 13. The customary congratulatory address to the Lord Lieutenant passed without a division, though Grattan expressed his personal dissent, speaking, as Lord Camden noticed, 'moderately and civilly, and with great temper.' On the 21st, however, he moved for a Committee on the State of the Nation, and a debate ensued, in which the whole question of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam was discussed. Grattan professed himself unable to fathom the real motives of that measure, but he asserted that the removal of certain officials, and the acceptance of Catholic emancipation, which were the reasons alleged, had both been clearly stipulated before the Government was formed. Portland had formally declared to those whose support in Ireland he solicited, that he had 'accepted office principally with a view to reform the abuses in the Government of Ireland, that the system of that Government was execrable, so execrable as to threaten not only Ireland with the greatest misfortune, but ultimately the Empire,' and that he would have himself gone over, if he had not persuaded Lord Fitzwilliam to accept the chief post in the Government of Ireland with the object of reforming its manifold abuses. Portland had assured his supporters, that he had obtained 'extraordinary power' with reference to Ireland. He had consulted members of the Irish Opposition, touching his arrangements of men and measures. He had sanctioned 'those principal removals which are supposed to have occasioned the recall of the deputy. An explanation and limitation of his powers did, indeed, afterwards

[1] Camden to Portland, April 6, 7; Pelham to Portland, April 6, 1795.

take place, but no such limitation or explanation as to defeat either the stipulated measures or the stipulated removals, one only excepted,[1] which never took place.'

As to the Catholic question, Grattan and his friends had repeatedly declared that they never would support a Government that would resist Catholic emancipation, though they had acquiesced in the decision of the Cabinet that the Bill should not be introduced by ministers. Their support of the Administration had been the result of 'a precise engagement,' that 'if the Catholics insisted to carry forward their Bill, Government would give it a handsome support.' 'Not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed, to yield it'—these, Grattan afterwards said, were the very words of Pitt when speaking to him on the Catholic Bill.[2]

He enumerated several measures of reform which had been intended by the Administration of Fitzwilliam, some of which had actually been introduced. They comprised a simplification and completion of Lord Westmorland's measure for relieving the poorest classes from the hearth tax, an attempt to diminish drunkenness by increasing the duties on spirits and removing those on beer, a plan of education, a more equal trade between England and Ireland, a reform in the system of the Dublin police, a more stringent regulation of the public expenditure. The United Irishmen remarked with some bitterness that parliamentary reform had no place in this catalogue,[3] and it is evident that no power had as yet been given to concede it, but it was almost certain soon to follow Catholic emancipation. The ministers refused all detailed explanations, alleging that the King had an undoubted right to recall a Lord Lieutenant,

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[1] Fitzgibbon.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 177.

[3] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 97.

and that the Lord Lieutenant and his Secretary act under written instructions from the Cabinet. In his reply, Grattan, while admitting that there must be a close correspondence between the executives in England and Ireland, denied that the viceroy's function was simply to obey orders, and to be the agent of the English Cabinet. He was the representative of the King, and not of the ministry. It was becoming the custom to establish in Ireland 'a monarchy of clerks, a government carried on by post, and under the dominion of spies,' 'a system where the clerks dominated, and their betters obeyed.' 'The Cabinet had heard appeals against the Lord Lieutenant from the persons removed, and tried unsummoned, on the testimony of partial witnesses, the representative of the King.' This was at least one cause of the recent recall. 'It is a matter of melancholy reflection, to consider how little the Cabinet knows of anything relating to Ireland. Ireland is a subject it considers with a lazy contumely, and picks up here and there, by accident or design, interested and erroneous intelligence.'

The statements of Grattan about the terms on which the Irish Whigs had agreed to support the Administration of Lord Fitzwilliam, were fully confirmed by the two Ponsonbys. The concluding speech of Grattan had such an effect, that the galleries burst into uncontrollable applause, and the House was cleared, but it had no appreciable influence upon the vote, and his motion was rejected by 158 to 48.[1]

The second reading of the Catholic Bill came on for discussion on May 4, and the debate which ensued lasted during the entire night, and only terminated at ten o'clock on the morning of the 5th. It shows with a painful vividness the character of the Irish House of

[1] *Parl. Deb.* xv. 165–192.

Commons—a body which contained a group of statesmen who in ability, patriotism, and knowledge would have done honour to any legislature, but also a body in which eloquence and argument dashed uselessly and impotently against a great purchased majority. 'In 1792,' said Parsons, 'a majority decided against giving any further privileges to the Catholics. In 1793 the same majority passed the Catholic Bill. At the beginning of this session, everyone believed that a majority would have voted for this Bill. Everyone believes that a majority will vote against it now, and should the English Ministers in the next session wish it to pass, who does not believe that a majority will vote for it? Besides, if the English Ministry should be changed, an event perhaps not very remote, this Bill would be immediately adopted.' The absolute necessity of completing, by a final abolition of disqualifications, the legislation of 1774, 1778, 1782, 1792, and 1793, was abundantly shown. It was argued, once more, that as certainly as the concession of landed property in 1778 and 1782 led to the concession of the suffrage which is attached to this kind of property, so certainly the right of voting must lead to the right of sitting in the House; that, for the sake of excluding from political power a few highly educated, able, and loyal men, distinguished beyond all others for their hatred to revolution and attachment to hereditary monarchy, the Government were rapidly throwing the bulk of the Catholics into the arms of a revolutionary democracy; that the policy of relaxation had already gone so far, that the remaining disqualifications were impotent to restrain, and only powerful to irritate and to insult. Catholics were already admitted to the bar, but they could not be King's counsel or judges. They were admitted in the army even to the command of regiments, but they might not rise to the rank of general. They were ad-

mitted to the subordinate revenue offices, but not to the higher office of commissioner. They were given the right of voting for members of Parliament, but they could not be members of Parliament themselves. They were allowed to become a great power in the State, but they were still treated as separate, hostile, and inferior. And these disqualifications were maintained in a time of revolution and of war, when the army, the navy, and the militia were crowded with Catholics, and when England was in close alliance with the most Catholic Powers of the Continent.

The fatal consequences that would inevitably follow the rejection of the Bill were most clearly seen. The policy of the statesmen of the Revolution, argued George Knox, in an admirable speech, was from their own point of view perfectly consistent. Believing it necessary to keep the Catholics in a condition of impotence, they very prudently deprived them of education and property; and they established by such means an undisturbed Protestant ascendency, but 'sank this country below the political horizon, in order that they might exclusively possess its eminences.' For good or for ill, that policy has been irrevocably abandoned. The Irish Parliament justly thought that 'we could not be a powerful, prosperous, and happy people, if three-fourths of us were ignorant and beggars.' It 'opened the gates of knowledge and opulence,' and by doing so, it created in Ireland 'unexampled and rapidly increasing prosperity,' and 'discovered with what usury protected and enfranchised industry repays its obligations.' But politically this enfranchisement was an act of infatuation or madness, unless it is carried further. 'The great body of the people is Catholic. Much of the real, and no small share of the personal, property of the country is in Catholic hands. The lower class, ignorant and turbulent, are fit instruments in the hands of

irritated and unsubdued ambition. In a few years, if trade increases, the Catholics must possess almost a monopoly of the personal wealth of the kingdom, a control, therefore, over the numerous class of manufacturers and mechanics—a description of people the most prone to turbulence. . . . If we drive the rich Catholic from the Legislature and from our own society, we force him to attach himself to the needy and disaffected. We oblige him, if pride and ambition have their usual operation, to breed and nourish discontent, and keep alive a religious quarrel.' It is impossible that the question can rest there. 'Take, then, your choice; re-enact your penal laws, risk a rebellion, a separation, or an Union, or pass this Bill; for the hour is nearly arrived when we must decide. The hour is already come when we ought to decide. . . . There are objections to it not to be overlooked; but the dangers which would follow its rejection are inevitable and tremendous, being rooted in the very nature of men and of society, and those to which its reception exposes us are doubtful, distant, and avertible. . . . Let us not delay that entire political union on which without doors all ranks are now agreed. . . . If we continue to exclude and irritate the Catholic, we can have no real security against the subversion of property and religion, but an unconditional submission to Great Britain, and a resignation of the crown of Ireland into the hands of the British Parliament. But if we adopt the measure now, we shall gradually liberalise the Catholic gentry; they will see how much their property, their liberty, and their lives depend upon the Constitution; how much that Constitution depends upon our connection with Great Britain, and how much that connection rests on the uniformity of the State religion.'

'We shall admit the Catholic,' he continued. 'I foresee it well. But we shall withhold that admission

so long, that at length we shall give without generosity what will be received without gratitude; we shall yield, not to reason, but to clamour; what ought to be the result of wisdom and reflection will be the work of panic and precipitation; and that day which shall record the last triumph of the Constitution will be to us a day of humiliation and disgrace.'

George Ponsonby, who had been designated by Fitzwilliam for the post of Attorney-General, and whom Fitzwilliam had pronounced to be the ablest debater after Grattan in the House of Commons, reminded the House with great bitterness that the fluctuation of the Government was no new thing, and that it had been already abundantly shown in 1792 and 1793. 'We have seen,' he said, 'an Administration encourage the Protestant against the Catholic pretensions. We have seen the same Administration excite the claims of those same Catholics, and ultimately we have seen that very Administration, after having alternately encouraged each party against the other, pass a Bill in favour of those Catholics, in opposition to the sentiments of the Protestants, which that Administration had excited.' He entirely disbelieved that the last change was due to any conscientious scruples, or to any fear of danger from Catholic members of Parliament. The Catholic question was made use of, he believed, either to colour the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, or to keep the country weak by keeping it divided. The argument from the coronation oath, which had suddenly risen to an extraordinary prominence, he treated with the contempt of a sound constitutional lawyer. The oath was enacted before the laws were passed which this Bill would repeal. It did not bind the King to refuse his assent to laws that might be enacted, but merely to execute those laws which were, or should be enacted, to preserve the Protestant religion. 'Could any gentleman seriously

believe that this oath tied up the King in his legislative capacity? It would be a strange constitution, indeed, which could be guilty of such an absurdity. Unquestionably, it was in his executive capacity only that this oath restrained him. No men were ever so preposterous as to think of binding up one branch of the legislature, by oath, to all futurity.'

One of the most remarkable speeches in this debate was delivered by Arthur O'Connor. Like Emmet, McNevin, and Fitzgerald, he had not yet joined the United Irishmen;[1] but he was already at heart a rebel; his speech is in a different key from the others that have been quoted, and it shows clearly both the influence of the new French ideas, and the process by which so many were now passing rapidly into rebellion. A great part of it consisted of rhetorical but powerful descriptions of the abuses which had made Irish representation the monopoly of a few families; of the steady evanescence throughout Europe of clerical influence and intolerant restrictions; of the effects of the exaggerated and ill-portioned endowments of the Established Church, in diverting clergymen from parochial duties, and turning them, to the great injury not only of religion, but of morals, into mere men of fashion and pleasure. 'It is no longer a secret,' he said, 'that the men who oppose the abolition of religious distinctions in our civil and military concerns, when the general voice of the nation has concurred in so wise, so just, and so politic a measure, are the men who usurp the whole political power of the country, and who have converted the whole representation of Ireland into a family patrimony.' But if the people of this country are convinced that the Constitution of 1782, which they so highly prized, 'has been destroyed by the bribery of a British Minister, and

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 309, 359.

the unexampled venality of an Irish Parliament;' if they are convinced 'that, instead of reciprocal advantage, nothing is to be reaped from their connection with England but supremacy and aggrandisement on the one side, and a costly venality, injury, insult, degradation, and poverty on the other,' is it not inevitable that they will begin to seek for foreign alliances against the connection? This, said O'Connor, is the true lesson to be learned from the mission of Jackson, and from the papers that were found in his possession. The time is past, and past for ever, when public opinion would torpidly acquiesce in political monopolies and religious disqualifications. 'Do not imagine that the mind of your countrymen has been stationary, while that of all Europe has been rapidly progressive; for you must be blind not to perceive that the whole European mind has undergone a revolution, neither confined to this nor that country, but as general as the great causes which have given it birth, and still continue to feed its growth.' For Ireland, he believed, issues of the most momentous and far-reaching kind depended on the decision of the House. 'You, none of you, can be ignorant that the British Minister has designs, in procrastinating this question, to procure advantages for his own country, at the expense of yours, greater than she was capable of receiving 'since the Revolution, at least, since the Union.' And so strongly impressed is this on the public mind, that you, who shall on this night vote for the rejection of the Bill, will appear in the eyes of the Irish nation, not only as men voting, in obedience to the British Minister, against the voice of the people, but as men voting for an union with England, by which this country is to be everlastingly reduced to the state of an abject province.'

It is a very remarkable fact, that the Government speakers never attempted to deny the repeated assertion

of the Opposition, that Protestant opinion was in favour of emancipation, nor did they endeavour to dispel the suspicion, which was spreading fatally and rapidly, that the Government were steering their bark through corruption, through revived religious animosities, through almost certain rebellion, towards a legislative union. Grattan skilfully availed himself of the resolution of the Catholic Committee, declaring that they would rather forego their emancipation than purchase it at the price of a legislative union, as an additional argument in favour of the former. 'The Roman Catholic,' he said, 'far from being dangerous, has borne his testimony in favour of the institution of the Irish Parliament, for he has resolved to relinquish his emancipation rather than purchase his capacities by an union. He has said, let the Catholic be free, but if his freedom is to be bought by the extinction of the Irish Parliament, we waive the privilege, and pray for the Parliament.'

The speech of Grattan was on the whole hopeful, more hopeful than wisdom could justify. He accused the Administration of having begun a religious war in 1792, but he maintained that they had wholly failed to produce any serious division in Ireland. 'The Protestants of a number of the counties, of all the great cities, and all the mercantile interests,' have petitioned in favour of the Catholics. With the single exception of the Corporation of Dublin, there had been no application against them. Nothing prevents their success but the influence of the Government. 'Catholic emancipation ceases to be a question between the Irish Protestant and Catholic, and is now a question between the ministers of another country and the people of Ireland.' It was a cheering sign, though perhaps not so important as Grattan represented it, that on the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam the students of Trinity College had presented an address in favour of emancipation. 'These

young men,' said Grattan, 'in a few years must determine this question.' 'They will soon sit on these seats blended with Catholics, while we, blended with Catholics, shall repose in the dust.'

No one, I think, can read this debate without acknowledging that the immense preponderance of argument and ability was on the side of emancipation. Duigenan and some of the other genuine opponents of the Catholics restated their old arguments, but the Government case was entrusted to Toler, the Solicitor-General. He was one of those officials whom Fitzwilliam had desired to replace; and having been long known as a selfish, violent, and unprincipled advocate, he was made Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was created Lord Norbury, and has left a most scandalous judicial reputation behind him. He placed the Government opposition to the admission of Catholics to Parliament on the highest possible grounds. It would violate the fundamental principles of the Constitution as established by the Revolution. It would be contrary to the coronation oath by which the King held his throne, to the Bill of Rights, to the compact on which the connection of the two countries depended. The Roman Catholic was asking that the Constitution should be changed. 'He has no right to demand it, nor have the Crown and Parliament, who are but trustees for its preservation, a right to alienate what has been confided to them as a trust.'[1] In other words, the Catholics, at a time when the most cautious and

[1] Marcus Beresford, in a letter to his father describing this debate, says: 'Toler spoke for above two hours, and left the question without an attempt to argue it, but concluded with a vehement assertion that the Bill could not be carried without the repeal of the Bill of Rights, the breach of the coronation oath, and of the compact between the two countries.' (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 109.)

conciliatory policy was imperatively required, were told on high Government authority that their disqualifications were permanent and indelible, essential to the connection of their country with England, essential to the maintenance of the monarchical constitution under which they lived. The independent voices in Parliament, and the voices of the Protestants beyond its walls, had spoken in no dubious terms; but the majority in the House of Commons, who a few months before had been perfectly ready to carry the Bill, were now equally ready to reject it, and it was thrown out by 155 votes to 84.[1]

From this time the Catholic question lost most of its prominence in the Irish Parliament, and from this time there is scarcely a page of Irish history on which a good man can look with pleasure. Anarchy and bloodshed, religious and class warfare, great measures almost wholly failing to produce their expected results, disaffection widening and deepening as grievances were removed, public opinion more and more degraded and demoralised, political life turned more and more into a trade in which the vilest men are exalted—these are the chief elements in the miserable story which the historian of modern Ireland is called upon to relate. It is impossible to say, with just confidence, whether this train of calamities could have been averted if all religious disqualifications had been removed in 1793 or 1795. The Protestants then undoubtedly desired it. Political agitation was almost unknown. The indispensable ascendency of property and loyalty was still unbroken; the relations of classes and creeds, which were hopelessly convulsed by the rebellion of 1798, and by the long

[1] See the full report of this long and most remarkable debate, from which I have only room to select a few passages. (*Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 208–361.)

agitation that followed it, were not yet essentially unsound, and more than a century had passed since Ireland had witnessed the clash of arms. In my own judgment, little permanent good could have been effected unless a moderate parliamentary reform and a commutation of tithes had been added to the abolition of religious distinctions; but with these measures, Ireland would probably have weathered the revolutionary storm. But though the chapter of what might have been lies beyond human sagacity, the actual train of cause and effect is sufficiently evident, and it is not too much to say, that the undecided and contradictory policy of these critical years was a leading cause of the rebellion of 1798, and of the fatal consequences that flowed from it.

One more step remained to be taken, in order fully to impress the Catholics with the sentiments of the Government. It was again to single out for conspicuous favour the man who was known to be their ablest and most implacable enemy. There is no reason to doubt that Fitzgibbon was perfectly honest in his opposition to the Catholics, and he unquestionably often proved himself a very useful servant of the English Government, but few judgments are more absurd than those which have represented him as a type of disinterested or self-sacrificing statesmanship. He had a great income, which he spent with the lavish profusion so characteristic of the Irish gentry,[1] and though wholly

[1] In the *Westmorland Correspondence* there are melancholy letters, written when Clare was dying, and immediately after his death, by Lady Clare, asking for some Government provision. Lord Clare, she says, by the will of his father could only settle on her a small provision out of his hereditary property. 'He certainly had a great income, but he lived up to and above it, and has not left more money than will pay his debts.' (Lady Clare to Westmorland, Jan. 26, Feb. 8, 27, March 1, 1802.) Lord Redesdale, in a letter in 1802, recommending for some assistance, a

free from the taint of personal corruption, he was keenly ambitious. His rise, during the last few years, had been surprisingly fast. He had been made Chancellor and peer in 1789, chiefly as a reward for his services on the Regency question. Lord Westmorland had given him a reversion of 2,300*l.* a year for two lives.[1] Almost immediately after his mischievous attack upon the Catholics in 1793 he had been made a viscount; and having borne a leading part in the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, he was now made Earl of Clare. Camden, in recommending him for the promotion, dwelt upon his services to the Government, and upon the attack which had been made on him, but he based his recommendation chiefly on the necessity of supporting and consolidating the anti-Catholic party. Yelverton, he said, who had been always on the side of the Catholics, had just been made a peer, and it was therefore peculiarly advisable to promote Fitzgibbon, who had strongly opposed them. No measure would do more to encourage those Protestants who were opposed to emancipation. They found it difficult to believe that the Government were in earnest. This would do much to convince them. Lord Fitzgibbon, Camden said, had previously asked for advancement in the peerage, but 'begged to leave the time entirely to my convenience.'[2]

The significance of the promotion, indeed, could not be overlooked. The Catholics and Reformers of Ireland were once more taught, that the man in whom the Government placed the greatest confidence was the politician who had justified, with scarcely a qualification, the whole penal code, who had contended that it

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first cousin of Lord Clare who was left completely destitute, expressed his regret 'that, with all the advantages possessed by the late Lord Clare, so many of his family should be in a state to sue for the public bounty.' (I.S.P.O.)

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxi. 1512.

[2] Camden to Portland, May 4, 1795.

was a fatal error to admit any class of Catholics to any share of political power, who had at the same time shown himself the most powerful enemy of every attempt to reform the Parliament, to diminish corruption, and to abolish or mitigate the tithe grievances.

Portland, as we have seen, had instructed Camden to conciliate the Catholics, as far as was compatible with the main lines of his policy. The recommendation, under the circumstances, seemed little less than derisory; but Camden was ready to act upon it, and the measure which was taken with this object was the foundation of an ecclesiastical seminary at Maynooth.

During the greater part of the century, the ecclesiastical education of the Catholic priesthood was carried on, contrary to law, but without any serious attempt at molestation, in continental colleges and seminaries, and in many of these, foundations for their support had been established, either by private liberality or by the munificence of foreign sovereigns. It appears from a return made to Parliament in 1808, 'of the state of the establishments on the Continent for the education of Irish Catholic secular clergymen previous to the French Revolution,' that at the time when the Revolution broke out there were 478 Irish ecclesiastical students on the Continent, of whom 348 were in France, and the remainder at Louvain, Antwerp, Salamanca, Rome, and Lisbon. They had received the rudiments of education in Ireland, and the greater number had been ordained before they were sent abroad to complete their studies, so that they were usually able to contribute to their own support, by officiating in petty chaplaincies, and discharging for small gratuities other offices of religion. The expense of their journey to the Continent was commonly defrayed by the Catholic gentry, and sometimes by collections in the chapels of their districts.

The deficiency, the hardships, and the dangers of

this mode of education had for some time attracted the attention of patriotic Irishmen. I have quoted the remarkable speech which was made on the subject in 1782 by Hely Hutchinson, in the Irish House of Commons. Hutchinson censured in the strongest manner the existing laws about Catholic education, but he equally insisted on the danger of establishing separate Popish colleges. It was a matter, he maintained, of the very first political importance that the Catholics, and especially the Catholic priesthood, should receive the best possible education at home, and that they should not be educated altogether apart from their fellow-countrymen. He desired that their higher education should be carried on at the University of Dublin; that diocesan schools should be established at public expense, in which Catholics might receive gratuitously an education to prepare them for the university; that a grant should be made for the establishment of sizarships, and other premiums for the special benefit of their poor students; and that they should have a divinity professor of their own creed, to educate them in their own theology. In secular education, he would establish no distinction. 'I would have them,' he said, 'go into examinations, and make no distinction between them and the Protestants, but such as merit might claim.'[1]

Burke, in the same year, wrote a letter to Lord Kenmare, in which he dwelt, from a different point of view, on the same subject. Seven years before, when visiting Paris, he had paid special attention to the college which existed in that city for the education of Irish priests, and he had been struck with its efficiency. The very worst part of the penal code, he truly said, was that relating to education, for while the Catholics

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 280, 281; *Irish Parl. Deb.* i. 309, 310.

were deprived of the means of education at home, they were forbidden to seek education abroad. Burke, however, strongly dissented from that portion of the scheme of Hutchinson which related to the education of the priesthood. It was impossible, he urged, that men who were intended for a life of celibacy, and for the delicate and dangerous duties of the confessional, could be properly educated in common with lay students, and in a Protestant university. History and reason abundantly showed that the Catholic priesthood might become an intolerable nuisance to a country, if they had not been formed to their profession by an altogether special and separate system of discipline and education, and the establishment of such a system, in separate seminaries, had been the most valuable moral result of the Council of Trent. Burke considered it a great grievance that no such seminaries existed in Ireland, but until they were established, he wished the present system of education on the Continent to be fully legalised. Men in power, he hoped, would at last learn 'to consider the good order, decorum, virtue, and morality of every description of men among them, . . . of more importance to religion and to the State, than all the polemical matter which has been agitated among men, from the beginning of the world to this hour.'[1]

In the twelve years that followed, most of the more serious grievances of the Irish lay Catholics relating to education were removed. Their admission to degrees in Dublin University carried out one great part of the policy of Hutchinson, and although no provision had been made for the education of the priesthood in Ireland, it seemed as if a compromise between the views of Burke and of Hutchinson might, with no great diffi-

[1] Letter to a peer of Ireland on the penal laws. (Burke's *Works*, vi. 280–289.)

culty, have been devised. A project, as we have seen, was much discussed of establishing a Catholic college in connection with Dublin University, and it might have secured for the ecclesiastical students the discipline and the professional education of a seminary, without withdrawing them altogether from the lectures and examinations of the university.[1] The singular liberality which, at this time, prevailed among the authorities of Dublin University, and the great moderation of the Irish prelates, made some such scheme appear very feasible, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the benefit, both moral and political, which Ireland might have derived from a priesthood imbued with the best liberal education of their time, and associated in some measure with the most cultivated and enlightened of their countrymen.

The French Revolution and the war of 1793 forced the question into sudden ripeness, by making the foreign education of ecclesiastical students impossible. In the beginning of 1794, the Catholic bishops presented a memorial to Lord Westmorland, stating that 400 students were constantly maintained and educated in France for the ministry of the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland; that in the troubles which had broken out in France, these seminaries had been abolished and their revenues confiscated, and that there was great danger that students educated in that country would be exposed to the 'contagion of sedition and infidelity,' and would introduce 'a licentious philosophy' into Ireland. They argued that an education at Dublin University, however well adapted for an ambitious laity,

[1] See vol. ii. p. 513. A pamphlet called *Considerations upon the Establishment of an University in Ireland for Educating Roman Catholics*, advocating a purely Catholic university for both lay and clerical students, was published in Dublin in 1784. It contains an interesting account of the scanty education of the existing priests, and of the evils that resulted from their illiteracy.

was not suited to men who 'were restricted to the humble walk of a subordinary ministry.' Certain branches of learning must be taught the priesthood, which were not included in the university course. Even in Catholic countries, candidates for holy orders received the most important part of their education in seminaries distinct from the public universities. A great proportion of the students for orders were too poor to bear the expense of education at the university, and of a constant residence in Dublin; 'and although the liberality of the present heads of the university might induce them to receive persons on the foundation, yet neither could a sufficient number be thus accommodated, nor would it prove grateful to the feelings of the parties.' Under these circumstances, the prelates petitioned for a royal licence, to endow ecclesiastical seminaries in Ireland under ecclesiastical superiors of their own communion.[1]

In the September of the same year, Burke wrote to Grattan urging his own opinion and that of his son, that if provision was not made for the instruction of ecclesiastical students in Ireland, 'barbarism and Jacobinism will almost certainly enter, by the breach made by the atheistic faction in France in the destruction of the Irish seminaries in that kingdom.'[2] Grattan fully concurred in this view. 'It is absolutely necessary,' he wrote, 'to allow the Catholic clergy a Catholic education at home. If they can't have a Catholic education at home, they can have none at all, or none which is not dangerous. I don't think any time should be lost; too much time has been lost already, both with regard to their education and Irish education in general; for which great funds of public, royal, and private dona-

[1] Plowden, ii. 446–448; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 72–75.
[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 155.

tions have been granted and eaten. There is not one great public school in Ireland; and yet the funds are great, but sunk in the person of the Master. . . . At the time when our Government were assuming public ignorance as an argument against Catholic emancipation, there lay before them a report of a committee with authentic evidence of this misapplication, in which they persisted to connive. . . . Such subjects are now peculiarly interesting, when the fortunes of the world are in the scale, and the intellectual order in some danger of kicking the beam.'[1] In Lord Fitzwilliam's Speech from the Throne, new measures for Catholic education were promised. Seventeen Catholic bishops met to consider the subject in Dublin, and Dr. Hussey came over from England to consult with them, but nothing had been finally arranged when the viceroy was recalled.[2]

It is worthy of notice, that while Burke, and other statesmen, saw in the home education of the Irish priesthood the best means of securing them from the contagion of democracy and sedition, Wolfe Tone, with an incomparably juster forecast, advocated the same measure for exactly opposite reasons. He invariably represented the Catholic clergy of his time as men who were essentially Tory in their principles; who were in natural alliance with the aristocracy of their creed, and who were a most formidable obstacle to the seditious and anti-English movement it was his object to foment. 'This country never will be well,' he wrote, 'until the Catholics are educated at home, and their clergy elective. Now is a good time, because France will not receive their students, and the Catholics are afraid of the Revolution.' He feared that the higher clergy would not be favourable to the change, and rejoiced, from his own point of view, that the breaking up of the seminaries in

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 245. [2] Ibid. pp. 267, 282, 283.

France obliged them to consent. 'In this light,' he wrote, 'as in ten thousand others, the Revolution was of infinite service to Ireland. . . . This education business appears to me of infinite importance for a thousand reasons.'[1]

On the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, Dr. Hussey, at the earnest request of the Duke of Portland, remained in Ireland to assist in elaborating the plan,[2] and although there was some divergence about the details, and especially about the degree to which it was to be placed under Catholic episcopal authority, the scheme itself was very generally welcomed. The war and the destruction of French seminaries made some change plainly necessary, and even in normal times it was a great hardship that the members of a very poor Church should be unable to educate their clergy in their own country. At the same time the evil was not without mitigations, and no subsequent generations of Irish priests have left so good a reputation as the better class of those who were educated in the seminaries of France, Italy, and Flanders, or at the Irish college at Salamanca.[3] They grew up at a time when Catholicism throughout Europe was unusually temperate, and they brought with them a foreign culture and a foreign grace, which did much to embellish Irish life. Their earlier prejudices were corrected and mitigated by foreign travel. They had sometimes mixed with a society far more cultivated than an Irish Protestant country clergyman was likely to meet, and they came to their ministry at a mature age, and with a real and varied knowledge of the world.

[1] Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 173, 195.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 297.

[3] The prominence of Salamanca as a place for the education of Irish priests, is curiously shown by the fact that between 1808 and 1816 no less than six priests, educated there, were made bishops in Ireland. See that very interesting work, *The Life of Mary Aikenhead*, by S. A. (2nd edit.), p. 143.

If they produced little or nothing of lasting value in theology or literature, they had at least the manners and feelings of cultivated gentlemen, and a high sense of clerical decorum; they had no sympathy with insurrection, turbulence, or crime, and they were saved by their position from the chief vices and temptations of their class upon the Continent. The leaders of a poor and unendowed Church, which was appealing to the principles of religious liberty in order to obtain political enfranchisement, were not likely to profess the maxims of persecutors or to live the lives of epicureans.

This type of priest might be frequently met with in Ireland in the last years of the eighteenth century, and in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and its disappearance has been an irreparable loss to Irish society. 'Mild, amiable, cultivated, learned, and polite,' wrote one who knew them well, 'uniting the meek spirit of the Christian pastor to the winning gentleness of the polished man of the world, these men were welcome guests at the tables of the Protestant gentry. . . . In their own communion they lent their influence to soothe the asperities of the time, and they brought their knowledge of mankind and of their own and foreign nations, to enforce their lessons of patience, fortitude, and forbearance.'[1]

It is probable that such priests were most common in the latter half of the century, when religious persecution had practically ended. In its earlier years, when the penal laws were in force, and when the Catholic community was very poor and very much oppressed, a different type predominated, and it continued in the later years of the century, among the poor curates and

[1] See a vivid description of these priests, and of the difference between them and the generation formed by Maynooth, in O'Driscoll's *Views of Ireland* (1823), ii. 112–115.

mendicant monks, coexisting with the type I have described. Boys, springing from the very humblest peasant class, learnt their letters and a little Latin at a hedge school, and then travelled through Ireland as mendicant scholars till they had obtained the means of going to France, where by the performance of servile duties and by the assistance of some old endowments they obtained their education for the priesthood. They usually returned to Ireland with a slight tincture of scholastic and controversial theology, a large store of extravagant legends, all the zeal of an impassioned missionary, and most of the tastes, passions, and prejudices of an ignorant peasant.[1] They formed the democratic, and certainly not the least important, element in the Irish Catholic Church. Their fanaticism, their credulity, their coarse, violent, and grotesque sermons, their frequent pretensions to thaumaturgic powers, their complete sympathy with the ideas and feelings of the peasantry, gave them an influence often much greater than that of the learned and polished ecclesiastic, and neither their prejudices nor their interests inclined them to the side of the law. Men of this description are often mentioned as implicated both in agrarian and in revolutionary disturbances, though there is, I think, no good evidence that any class of Irish priests in the eighteenth century were guilty of the systematic encouragement of crime, which has been charged, on very serious authority, against not a few of their successors.[2]

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[1] Newenham's *View of the Circumstances of Ireland*, pp. 179–181. That charming tale of Carleton, *The Poor Scholar*, throws a faithful light on this aspect and period of Irish life.

[2] See the very remarkable statement of Lord Clarendon (Nov. 26, 1847), which was sent to Rome, and the accompanying letter of Lord Palmerston to Lord Minto. Lord Palmerston did not hesitate to say: 'You may safely go further than Clarendon has chosen to do, and you may confidently assure the Papal authorities, that at present in Ireland misconduct is the rule,

It is not surprising that the type of priests in Ireland should have greatly improved in the early years of George III. The growing wealth of the Catholic community attracted men of a somewhat higher class to the priesthood, and provided better means of education and subsistence, and in settled times, and under the influence of religious liberty, the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline became more easy. The Catholic gentry were also now a more considerable body, and it was a common thing for a Catholic landlord, when he found the son of a deserving tenant desirous of entering the priesthood, to defray the expenses of his outfit and of his journey to the Continent, and afterwards, by his influence with the bishop, to obtain for him some desirable professional situation. Much real though unrecognised patronage was thus exercised by the leading Catholic laymen, and kindly relations of friendship and gratitude grew up, which greatly softened and elevated the tone of Irish life. One of the first and most evident results of the establishment of Maynooth, was to weaken or destroy these relations.[1]

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and good conduct the exception, in the Catholic priests; that they in a multitude of cases are the open, and fearless, and shameless instigators to disorder, to violence and murder, and every week the better conducted, who are by constitution of human nature the most quiet and timid, are being scared by their fellow-priests, as well as by their flocks, from a perseverance in any efforts to give good counsel, and to restrain violence and crime. . . . I really believe there never has been in modern times, in any country professing to be civilised and Christian, nor anywhere out of the central regions of Africa, such a state of crime as now exists in Ireland. There is evidently a deliberate and extensive conspiracy among the priests and the peasantry, to kill off or drive away all the proprietors of land, to prevent and deter any of their agents from collecting rent, and thus practically to transfer the land of the country from the landowner to the tenant.' (Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston*, ii. 49–53.)

[1] See the evidence of Archbishop Magee before a parliamentary committee in 1825, p. 785.

The Church was governed by four archbishops and twenty-two bishops, appointed by the cardinals of the Congregation De Propaganda Fide, subject to the approval of the Pope, but nearly always selected from among a few names that were sent to Rome by the clergy of the diocese and by the bishops of the province. Old and infirm bishops were accustomed to choose coadjutors, who were almost invariably, on their recommendation, appointed their successors. The bishop usually held the best parish in his diocese, and in addition to the revenue derived from this source, he received a small sum, varying from a crown to a guinea, for every marriage licence, and a yearly tribute, varying from two to ten guineas, from each parish priest. The parish priests were appointed solely by the bishops, but after a certain tenure of office, they could not, except under extreme circumstances, be dispossessed. They were paid by Easter and Christmas dues, by fees at weddings, christenings, and generally at the visitation of the sick, and by masses, which were usually charged at the rate of two shillings each. In some parts of the country, tributes of hay, oats, and fish were given to the priest instead of money dues, and his turf was cut, his corn reaped, and his meadow mowed gratuitously. The curate had usually a third part of the general receipts of the parish.[1]

The clergy formed a well-organised and, to a great extent, a self-governed body, but it seems certain that their influence over their people had much diminished during the period between the accession of George III. and the rebellion of 1798. This was largely due to causes that affected Ireland in common with all Europe,

[1] See a detailed and valuable account of the organisation and position of the clergy, in a letter from a priest of the diocese of Cork to Newenham (written in 1806). (Newenham's *View of the Circumstances of Ireland*, append. 39–42.)

and had led a great proportion of the best intellects of the day to believe that clerical influence, as a serious element in human affairs, could scarcely survive the eighteenth century. The lowering of the theological temperature, the spread of free-thinking tenets, the contempt for superstition in all its forms, the growing tendency to value religions on account of their common morality, and not on account of their distinctive dogmas, was felt in Ireland as it was felt elsewhere, and it was pronounced, on good Roman Catholic authority, that the relaxation of the Popery laws had greatly weakened the hold of the priests over their people. In another class, and in another way, the Whiteboy convulsions of 1786 had a similar effect,[1] and the spirit of the new political movement which had arisen among the Catholics was essentially unclerical. We have had much evidence in the course of this work how erroneously some of the most eminent statesmen and thinkers of the eighteenth century forecast the religious future, but those who judge mainly by the event will probably greatly underrate their sagacity. Among the changes of history there are some which are due to causes so powerful, so widespread, and so deep-rooted, that they could not have been averted or even greatly modified, but there are many which were clearly preventible, and which may be largely traced to accidental circumstances, and especially to political blunders. Had the inevitable

[1] Newenham's *View of the Circumstances of Ireland*, append. 39–42. The account which Newenham's correspondent gives of the decline of ecclesiastical influence, is corroborated by several passages in Wolfe Tone's diary and autobiography, and by several statements in the Irish debates. It is curious to observe that as late as 1806, Alexander Knox, one of the most earnest and profound religious writers of his time, wrote to Hannah More: 'I have little doubt that a time will come when the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland will, in a body, propose to conform to our Church.' (Knox's *Remains*, iii. 188.)

changes in France at the close of the eighteenth century been effected in a peaceable and orderly manner, and by a well-organised Government, Europe might have been spared the great reaction which was the consequence of the horrible crimes that disgraced the French Revolution, and of the long and sanguinary wars that followed it. In Ireland the revival of ecclesiastical influence was largely due to events which were certainly not inevitable—to the rebellion of 1798, which rekindled all the passions of religious war; to the legislative union, which diverted a great part of the energies of the community from national to sectarian channels; to the agitation of O'Connell, which united the democracy of Ireland, under the guidance of their priests, in a fierce struggle for that Catholic emancipation, which the Parliament of the gentry of Ireland had been perfectly ready to grant in 1793 and in 1795.

A Catholic college on a small scale had been established at Carlow in 1793, and it counted among its professors some French refugee priests.[1] It was intended, however, for the education of laymen, and the College of Maynooth was the first Irish establishment since the Revolution for the education of the priesthood. Though instituted primarily for the education of that body, there was, at first, some question of including Catholic lay students in the establishment, and although, apparently, through the influence of Archbishop Troy, this project was dropped,[2] no further restriction was introduced into the Bill than that the college was to be 'for the better education of persons professing the Popish or Roman Catholic religion.' Its government was placed in the hands of a body of trustees, to which the Chancellor and the three other chief judges officially

[1] Brenan's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, ii. 321.

[2] See on this subject the statements of Lord Kilwarden and of Lord Clare. (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 368, 369, 371, 372.)

belonged, but which consisted mainly of the Catholic bishops, who, however, were elected as individuals, and not as enjoying any titular rank or dignity. They were empowered to purchase lands to the annual value of 1,000*l.*, and to receive private subscriptions and donations without limit, for the purposes of the college. There was, at first, no Government endowment for the education of the students, but an immediate parliamentary grant of 8,000*l.* was voted to purchase a house and other necessary buildings for their accommodation. Dr. Hussey was appointed President.[1]

Hely Hutchinson, who had so clearly foreseen, and so powerfully stated, the danger of establishing in Ireland separate sectarian colleges, was no longer on the stage. He had died in September 1794, and the nation thus lost, in a most critical moment, the wisest and ablest advocate of liberal education. The discussion on the Maynooth Bill in the Irish Parliament is not reported, and I cannot tell whether any speaker dwelt upon the great evil of dissociating Irish clerical education from the education of the university. A very able man, who was then a fellow of Trinity College, and afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, in evidence which he gave before the House of Lords in 1825, has mentioned the strong objections which he and others outside Parliament had expressed to the scheme, and the pressure they put upon the members of the university to oppose it. 'The disadvantages,' he said, 'of the contracted and monastic plan, which a separate college for Roman Catholic priests would require, were strongly contrasted, in my mind, with the advantages which would redound both to the character of the Roman Catholic clergy itself, and to society at large, from the mixture of the

[1] Camden to Portland, April 14, 1795; Pelham to Portland, April 24; 35 Geo. III. c. 21. (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 371, 372.)

two denominations, Protestant and Roman Catholic, in the same university. At that time, Roman Catholic students abounded in Trinity College, and there was nothing of the hostility between the two religious descriptions that has since unhappily prevailed. It seemed, then, most desirable to bring the two classes together within the same seminary, and for this, great facility was afforded, there being nothing in the regulations of our university that could throw impediments in the way. . . . It appeared to me and others at that day, that under these circumstances an arrangement might be formed, whereby the Roman Catholic students might have every benefit of a liberal university education, and, at the same time, be provided, through some distinct scheme of religious institution of their own formation, with the instruction peculiarly requisite for their future profession, the heads of the university being at all times ready to offer facilities for such a plan.'[1]

The most remarkable fact, however, connected with the discussion, that has come down to us, is a Catholic petition, which was presented by Grattan, protesting against two parts of the scheme. The first objection of the petitioners was to the power which was given to the trustees to regulate the studies and make all appointments in the college. The end of education, they said, is 'the full and free development of human faculties, and the formation of a virtuous character,' and it should, therefore, be as little shackled as possible by any external restraint. They desired that both admission into the college, and all professorships and posts of dignity in it, should be thrown open to examination, and should thus be made the rewards of superior merit, without any possibility of jobbing. They cited the public examina-

[1] See the evidence of Archbishop Magee in 1825 before the Committee on the State of Ireland, p. 786.

tions for fellowships and sizarships in Trinity College as examples, and they earnestly asked that a similar system should be introduced into their own Catholic college. The second objection is still more remarkable. It was to the clauses which provided that the college should be exclusively Roman Catholic—that no Protestant should be admitted among its students or among its teachers. Such an exclusion was pronounced by the Catholic petitioners to be 'highly inexpedient, inasmuch as it tends to perpetuate that line of separation between his Majesty's subjects of different religions, which the petitioners do humbly conceive it is the interest of the country to obliterate; and the petitioners submit that, if the youth of both religions were instructed together in those branches of classical education which are the same for all, their peculiar tenets would, in all probability, be no hindrance hereafter to a friendly and liberal intercourse through life.' 'Having,' they added, 'in common with the rest of their brethren, the Catholics of Ireland, received, as one of the most important and acceptable benefits bestowed on them by his Majesty and the Legislature, the permission of having their youth educated along with the Protestant youth of the kingdom in the University of Dublin, and experience having fully demonstrated the wisdom and utility of that permission, they see with deep concern the principle of separation and exclusion, they hoped removed for ever, now likely to be revived and re-enacted.'[1]

We can hardly have a more striking proof of the change that has passed over the spirit of Irish Catholicism than is furnished by this petition, and if its recommendations had been carried out, the Irish priesthood might have been a very different body from what it has become. On wholly dissimilar grounds, Burke

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 201–203.

also looked on the new foundation with distrust. The strong bias in favour of sacerdotalism, which broadly distinguishes him from Grattan, appears to me to have often deflected his judgment, and I cannot regard the remarkable letters which he wrote to Dr. Hussey, who was now negotiating on the side of the Catholic priesthood, as evincing real prescience or wisdom. Burke was extremely anxious that Catholic colleges should be established, but he would have gladly placed them altogether under priestly control. The prelates, he said, should accept, from any Government, money for the establishment of such colleges; they should consent that accounts of the expenditure should be annually laid before a committee of the House of Commons, to prevent all suspicion of jobbing. But they should resist every other interference, and decline any offer which reserved to the members of the Irish Government a power of direction or control over clerical education. 'I would much rather trust,' he wrote, 'to God's good providence and the contributions of your own people, for the education of your clergy, than to put into the hands of your known, avowed, and implacable enemies —into the hands of those who make it their merit and their boast, that they are your enemies—the very fountains of your morals and your religion. . . . The scheme of these colleges, as you well know, did not originate from them. But they will endeavour to pervert the benevolence and liberality of others into an instrument for their own evil purposes. Be well assured that they never did, and that they never will, consent to give one shilling of money for any other purposes than to do you mischief. If you consent to put your clerical education, or any other part of your education, under their direction or control, then you will have sold your religion for their money. There will be an end, not only of the Catholic religion, but of all religion, all

morality, all law, and all order, in that unhappy kingdom.'

He begs his correspondent, not to be misled by childish discussions about the rights of states and governments to control education. The real question, he said—and in this respect, his words were profoundly true, and have a much wider application than he gave to them—is, who are the men who would exercise this power. 'Know the men you have to deal with, in their concretes, and then you will judge what trust you are to put in them, when they are presented to you, in their abstract.' Such men as the Archbishop of Cashel, or Cooke, or Duigenan, or the Speaker, or, above all, Fitzgibbon—'you best know whether they are your friends or your enemies.'[1]

With these sentiments, it is not surprising that Burke should have been displeased with the Maynooth Bill. 'I hear,' he wrote, 'and am extremely alarmed at hearing, that the Chancellor and the chiefs of the benches are amongst your trustees. If this be the case, so as to give them the power of intermeddling, I must fairly say, that I consider, not only all the benefit of the institution to be wholly lost, but that a more mischievous project never was set on foot. I should much sooner make your college according to the first Act of Parliament, as a subordinate department to our Protestant University—absurd as I always thought that plan to be—than make you the instrument, or instruments, of the jobbing system. I am sure that the constant meddling of the bishops and clergy with the Castle, and of the Castle with them, will infallibly set them ill with their own body. All the weight which hitherto the clergy have had in keeping the people quiet, will be wholly lost.'

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 295–306.

In the same letter, Burke, while expressing his regret at the Jacobinical tone which had appeared in the Catholic lay committee, protested against its dissolution, on the ground that the Catholics, without a complete organisation, would be unable to contend with their enemies. He strongly advocated a project, which had been formed, for making, with the assistance of their clergy, a religious census, in order to show their great numerical superiority; and he quoted, with approbation, a saying of Lord Fitzwilliam, that 'the depression of the Catholics is not the persecution of a sect, but tyranny over a people.' He concluded his letter, by desiring that some books, which had been left by his deceased son, should be presented as a memorial, either to the new Catholic college, or to that of Carlow.[1]

This letter appears to have been shown about in Catholic circles, and it came to the knowledge of one of the agents of the Government, who took a copy and sent it to the Castle. Pelham was at that time in England, but Cooke transmitted to him this copy with injunctions of profound secrecy, and as a document of the highest importance. 'If it be true,' he said, 'that the author has been the chief, if not sole, mover of all the measures with respect to the Irish Catholics, his real creed, principles, and object can no longer be misunderstood,' and he declared that the letter showed clearly that the design of Burke, and of his Irish followers, was to bring about a revolution in Ireland, and to make Ireland a Popish country. In truth, however, this letter, though naturally exceedingly displeasing to the knot of men who had just obtained the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, contained absolutely nothing which was not in full accordance with the well-known opinions

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 320–323.

of Burke, and Pelham wrote back to his alarmed correspondent, that he had already seen it, as it had been shown to him by Dr. Hussey.[1] Burke's extreme distrust of Fitzgibbon and several other leading members of the Irish Administration, had long been expressed, and he believed—as it appears to me very erroneously—that a system of separate clerical education which was wholly under ecclesiastical influence, would prove an antidote to the Jacobin spirit, which he saw rising among the Irish Catholics.

In another letter, written at this time, he expressed fully to Dr. Hussey the alarm with which he saw Catholic Ireland, or at least the lay leaders of Catholic Ireland, drifting into disaffection. 'I do not like,' he wrote, 'the style of the meeting at Francis Street.[2] The tone was wholly Jacobinical. . . . The language of the day went plainly to a separation of the two kingdoms. God forbid that anything like it should ever happen. They would both be ruined by it; but Ireland would suffer most and first. . . . It is a foolish language, adopted from the United Irishmen, that their grievances originate from England. . . . It is an ascendency which some of their own factions have obtained here, that has hurt the Catholics with this Government. It is not as an English Government, that ministers act in that manner, but as assisting a party in Ireland. When they talk of dissolving themselves as a Catholic body, and mixing their grievances with those of their country, all I have to say is, that they lose their own importance as a body, by this amalgamation, and they sink real matters of complaint in those which are factious and imaginary. For, in the name of God, what grievances has Ireland as Ireland, to complain of,

[1] Cooke to Pelham, October 6 (most secret), 23, 1795.

[2] The assembly of Catholics on April 9, at which the resolutions about the Union were carried. See pp. 318, 319.

with regard to Great Britain; unless the protection of the most powerful country upon earth—giving all her privileges, without exception, in common to Ireland, and reserving to herself only the painful pre-eminence of tenfold burthens—be a matter of complaint? The subject, as a subject, is as free in Ireland as he is in England. As a member of the Empire, an Irishman has every privilege of a natural-born Englishman. . . . No monopoly is established against him anywhere. The great staple manufacture of Ireland . . . is privileged in a manner that has no example. The provision trade is the same. Nor does Ireland, on her part, take a single article from England, but what she has with more advantage than she could have it from any nation upon earth. I say nothing of the immense advantage she derives from the use of the English capital. . . . The tenor of the speeches in Francis Street, attacking the idea of an incorporating union between the two kingdoms, expressed principles that went the full length of a separation, and of a dissolution of that union which arises from their being under the same crown. . . . Ireland *constitutionally* is independent; *politically* she can never be so. It is a struggle against nature. She must be protected, and there is no protection to be found for her, but either from France or England.'

He proceeded to dilate upon the ruin which would befall Ireland if she placed herself under the dependence of France; the danger of the new Irish Jacobins, 'who, without any regard to religion, club all kinds of discontents together, in order to produce all kinds of disorders;' the madness and wickedness of Catholics who ally themselves with a Power which is the inveterate enemy of all religions, but especially of Catholicism, and he warned the Catholic leaders that some of their members were entering on a course which would deprive them of their oldest and most trusted allies. 'Catholics, as things

now stand, have all the splendid abilities, and much of the independent property, in Parliament, in their favour, and every Protestant (I believe, with very few exceptions) who is really a Christian. Should they alienate these men from their cause, their choice is amongst those who indeed may have ability, but not wisdom or temper in proportion, and whose very ability is not equal, either in strength or exercise, to that which they lose. They will have to choose men of desperate property, or of no property, and men of no religious and no moral principle.'

There is much more in this letter which deserves quotation, but my extracts have already extended too far. One sentence, however, with which Burke concluded his survey of Irish politics, must not be omitted. 'If Grattan, by whom I wish the Catholics to be wholly advised, thinks differently from me, I wish the whole unsaid.'[1]

It is interesting to compare this letter of Burke with a very confidential and very elaborate letter, which was written nearly at the same time by the Duke of Richmond to his sister, Lady Louisa Conolly, for the purpose of being laid before her husband, who was one of the most important members of the Irish House of Commons. This letter discloses very clearly another order of ideas about Ireland, which was certainly influencing the minds of some prominent English statesmen, and it is especially curious, as the writer had himself been at one time a parliamentary reformer of the most extreme democratic type. The duke expressed his deep conviction that the existing bond between the two countries was utterly precarious, and could not possibly be permanent, and that the full

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 308–317. This letter was written May 18, 1795.

admission of the Catholics to political power in the independent Parliament of a country in which they are the great majority, must lead, in time, to their ascendency, to the ruin of the Protestants, to the ruin of the British Empire. Its first consequence, he said, would be the downfall of the Protestant Establishment. The next would be the ruin of the landlords, for the Protestant ownership of land which had been established by the Act of Settlement, the confiscations and the penal laws, could not long survive a political revolution. The ascendant Catholics would then, very naturally, claim a Catholic king and government, which would mean separation from Great Britain, and separation would inevitably pass into hostility. All these calamities seemed impending in the near future, and the only possible way of averting them, was the speedy enactment of a legislative union of the two countries. Under such an union, the Catholics would 'only become a partial majority of a part of the Empire, and their claims must give way to the superior ones of the majority of the whole. . . . The whole argument and justice of the case, which was before in their favour, becomes against them, and the Protestant king, religion, and government may be maintained in Ireland.'

It may be said that the Catholics, perceiving this, will always resist an union, 'and that they will be joined by the Protestants, in opposing a measure so unpopular in Ireland, by which all parties will lose so much of their consequence. . . . But let the Protestants choose. It is, in my opinion, the only alternative they have, to carry such a measure or to submit to the evils I have foretold, which will come on with rapid steps, and if they delay it, there will soon be no longer the Government that can do it. They had better, therefore, make this use of their power, while they yet have it, to secure, by one bold measure, their property and future

consequence.' 'But,' continues the duke, 'I think the Catholics, too, might in the present moment be got to concur in the plan, by bribing them high. . . . Bribed they must be, as after all it is clear that an union is the deathblow of their vast hopes, which they will only give up for some certain present and considerable advantage, and Great Britain cannot be too liberal in its terms of union with Ireland, as England was with Scotland, for although the lesser nation should gain many preferences and peculiar benefits, the larger obtains that great security, which overbalances every little distinction that can be granted.'

A passage follows which some readers will regard as very significant. 'If there should be such opposition and resistance to this measure in Ireland, as to occasion a civil war, even that extremity, provided the Protestant interest of Ireland is hearty with us in the cause, would, in my opinion, be better, now that it can be fought on advantageous terms for such an object, than to let it arise a few years hence, inevitably as I think it must, on grounds we cannot maintain.' The question, however, though it is one of deep importance to the future of the British Empire, is primarily a question for the Irish Protestants. 'England may subsist without Ireland, but the Protestant interest in Ireland can be preserved, in my opinion, by no means but an union.'

'If Conolly,' continues the duke, 'should see this business in the light that I do, I would advise him to say nothing about it to Mr. Grattan, but to confer privately upon it with the Chancellor of Ireland, Lord Fitzgibbon, who will be best able to say what can or ought to be done to unite the Protestant interest for an union. Then the Chancellor might come over here, and talk to Mr. Pitt about it. Possibly our Government here, might have the weakness to be afraid of undertaking the only plan that can save Ireland, and preserve

the connection. . . . If it fails of success, there will be at least this comfort, that one has done what one could.'[1]

On April 23, the long-deferred trial of William Jackson for high treason took place. He was defended by Curran and by several other counsel, and among them by Leonard McNally, at whose table he had met the leaders of the United Irishmen. The evidence of Cockayne, corroborated by the documents that had been seized, was conclusive, and after a trial which appears to have been perfectly fair, the prisoner was found guilty, but recommended to mercy. He had during his long imprisonment rejected a promising chance of escape, and appears to have been very weary of his wasted and discreditable life. He was brought up to receive judgment on the 30th. The spectators were struck with his ghastly pallor, with the convulsive twitches of his countenance, and with the perspiration that rose from him almost like a steam, but his arms were crossed and his features set with a desperate resolution. When asked why sentence should not be pronounced, he bowed silently and pointed to his counsel, who raised a technical objection and argued it at length. Before the discussion had terminated, Jackson fell down in the agonies of death. He had received that morning, apparently from the hand of his wife, a dose of arsenic, and he died in the dock. It is said that, as he entered the court, he had whispered with mournful triumph to one of his counsel, the dying words of Pierre, in Otway's 'Venice Preserved,' 'We have deceived the Senate.' Perhaps a truer picture of his last feelings may be gathered from some verses, copied in his handwriting, which were found upon him and produced at the inquest. 'Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;

[1] The Duke of Richmond to Lady L. Conolly, June 27, 1795. This letter is among the papers of Lady Bunbury.

for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring Thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive me all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel violence. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee.'

The career of Jackson was not one to excite sympathy or enthusiasm, but his trial had the important effect of convincing the Irish people, that the French Government was seriously attending to their affairs, and that a speedy invasion was very probable, and it also produced some considerable changes among the United Irishmen. Wolfe Tone, though he had founded the society, had lately quarrelled with its leaders, had devoted himself almost exclusively to the Catholic question, and had not attended a meeting or taken part in the concerns of the United Irishmen since May 1793.[1] He was now deeply compromised, for though he had refused the mission to France, his intercourse with Jackson was known, and his representation of the state of Ireland was in the hands of the Government. He did not, however, believe that there was any sufficient evidence to endanger his life, and the law officers were of the same opinion. He was a popular man, and the large circle of his friends included several who differed widely from his politics; among others, Marcus Beresford, the son of the all-powerful John Beresford. Through the kindly intervention of the Beresfords, and with the assent of the Attorney-General, Wolfe Tone made a compact with the Government. He acknowledged that he had held conversations of a very criminal nature with Jackson; he drew up in writing a minute account of all that had passed between Jackson, Rowan,

[1] Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 121.

and himself, and he agreed to leave Ireland, provided that he was not himself brought to trial, that he was not called as a witness, and that his confession was not made use of against either Rowan or Jackson, or to the prejudice of any other person mentioned, except for the purpose of preventing a renewal of treasonable practices. In May 1795 he sailed for Philadelphia, where he not long after met Napper Tandy and Hamilton Rowan.[1]

A less known but more important result of the arrest of Jackson, remains to be told. Hitherto the information which the Government had obtained about the proceedings of the United Irishmen, had been of a very slight and superficial character, but they now obtained the services of a man who had a real knowledge of the inner mechanism of the agitation, and whose letters form one of the best pictures of the events that are to be related. Leonard McNally had been for some time the most conspicuous lawyer connected with the movement. He was born in Dublin in 1752, and, in addition to his legal career, he mixed much both in literature and politics. He practised for a short time at the English bar. He edited a newspaper called the 'Public Ledger.' He published several plays and comic operas, some of which were very successful, and he attained considerable practice at the Irish bar,[2] though

[1] Tone's own account of the transaction (*Memoirs*, i. 114–121), must be compared with the *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 24–34. Beresford considered it a great object to get Tone out of the country. Tone's confession appears to have been ultimately given to Lord Clare.

[2] In a letter to the Government in 1805, asking for one of the places created by a new Police Bill, McNally said that he had then been twenty-nine years at the bar; that for sixteen years he had been in constant practice in the courts of criminal jurisdiction in Ireland, and that he had been employed for the defendant in almost every important trial in Ireland since 1790. He had published a successful book on 'the law of evidence,' and had written, but not yet published, another on 'the laws for preserving the peace.' (July 4, 1805, I.S.P.O.)

he was not quite in the first rank, and though some cloud of suspicion and discredit seems to have always hung over his reputation. Nature had not dealt kindly with him, and there was much in his appearance and manner that provoked ridicule and contempt. Sir Jonah Barrington had quarrelled with him, and his accuracy in narrative can never be trusted, but he had a keen eye for personal characteristics, and his picture of McNally seems confirmed by other evidence. He described him as 'a good-natured, hospitable, talented, and dirty fellow,' with a fine eye, but a grotesque figure nearly as broad as it was long, with legs of unequal length, a face that no washing could clean, a great deal of middling intellect, a shrill, full, good bar voice, great quickness at cross-examination, and sufficient adroitness in defence. He had, however, higher qualities than this sketch would imply—a singularly wise, just, and luminous judgment in politics, a genuine humanity of disposition and generosity of impulse, which never wholly deserted him in the midst of a base and treacherous career.

He appears to have been one of the many men who have been impelled by an eager intellectual temperament into situations of danger, which their nervous organisation was quite unfit to endure, and there is, I think, no reason to doubt that for many years he was sincerely attached to the popular cause. He wrote a pamphlet on the claims of Ireland, as early as 1782. He was counsel for Napper Tandy in his quarrel with the House of Commons. He was an original member of the United Irish Society, and when Barrington in 1793 made some imputation on that society, McNally challenged him, and was severely wounded in the duel. Shut out from all Crown patronage and greatly injured in his practice at the bar, by the imputation of disloyalty and by the disfavour of those in authority,

McNally lost much more by his politics than he ever gained from the Government, and he was a trusted member of the National party. Like most of the first United Irishmen, he, however, probably only aimed at parliamentary reform; and he saw with dismay, that the movement to which he had committed himself, and which was at first perfectly legal, was sweeping on rapidly to revolution. In a letter, written in May 1794, the informer who has already been cited, mentions the great and evident terror shown by McNally to the meetings of the committee when matters began at assume a treasonable tone. There is, I believe, no ground for the suspicion, that, when with his accustomed hospitality he received Jackson and Cockayne at his table, and introduced them to the leaders of the movement, he was acting as a Government agent. Much treason, however, appears to have been talked on the occasion, and when the timid and nervous lawyer learnt that it had been all overheard, and noted down by a spy, he perceived that he was in the power of the Government, and he resolved to save himself from ruin by betraying the cause.

His first service was a peculiarly shocking one. Jackson, shortly before his death, had found an opportunity of writing four short letters, recommending his wife and child, and a child who was still unborn, to two or three friends, and to the care of the French nation, and he also drew up a will, leaving all he possessed to his wife, and entrusting McNally with the protection of her interests. He wrote at the bottom of it, 'Signed and sealed in presence of my dearest friend, whose heart and principles ought to recommend him as a worthy citizen—Leonard McNally.' These precious documents he entrusted to his friend, and about three weeks after the death of Jackson, McNally placed them in the hands of the Irish Government.

A few days later, Camden sent a copy of them to England, with a 'most secret and confidential letter.' 'The paper which accompanies this,' he said, 'was delivered to Counsellor McNally, from whom Government received it. There is so much evidence against this person, that he is (I am informed) completely in the power of Government. Your grace will observe, that the care of Mrs. Jackson is recommended by her husband to the National Convention, and that Mr. McNally is desired to assist her by every means in his power to procure her assistance from them. It has occurred to me, that an excuse might be made for Mr. McNally's being allowed to enter France for the purpose of attending to this woman's fortunes, that he should go through London, and in case your grace should wish to employ him, I would inform you when and where he will be found.'[1]

Portland replied that he was perfectly ready to make use of the services of McNally in France, if Camden thought that he might safely be trusted, but he suggested that this was very doubtful. The control which Government possessed over him depended entirely upon the conclusive evidence of treason they had against him. Would that control continue in a foreign country? Camden, on reflection, agreed that it would not be safe to try the experiment. McNally, however, he was convinced, would be very useful at home.[2]

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[1] Camden to Portland, May 20, 1795 (Record Office). At the bottom of the copy sent by Camden is written, 'True copies from the originals delivered to me, May 14, 1795, by J. W.' J. W. is the signature under which McNally invariably wrote to the Government. I am unable to say what had happened to him between Jackson's death (April 30) and May 14, whether fresh evidence had been brought against him, and under what circumstances he was induced to surrender the papers of Jackson.

[2] Portland to Camden, May 22; Camden to Portland, May 26, 1795.

Of this, indeed, there could be little doubt. As confidential lawyer of the United Irishmen, he had opportunities of information of the rarest kind. It is certain that he sometimes communicated to the Government the line of defence contemplated by his clients, and other information which he can only have received in professional confidence, and briefs annotated by his hand, will be found among the Government papers at Dublin. He was also able, in a manner which was not less base, to furnish the Government with early and most authentic evidence about conspiracies which were forming in France. James Tandy, son of Napper Tandy, had been a brave and distinguished officer in the service of the East India Company, and although he had been a United Irishman in the beginning of the movement, he appears to have been very unlike his father both in character and opinions. McNally was his intimate friend, and by his means saw nearly every letter that arrived from Napper Tandy, and some of those which came from Rowan and Reynolds. The substance of these letters was regularly transmitted to the Government, and they sometimes contained information of much value. Besides this, as a lawyer in considerable practice, constantly going on circuit, and acquainted with the leaders of sedition, McNally had excellent opportunities of knowing the state of the country, and was able to give very valuable warnings about the prevailing dispositions.

Few men would have been thought less capable of long-continued deception than this good-humoured, brilliant, and mercurial lawyer; and in times when public feeling ran fiercely against all who were suspected of disloyalty, he was the most constant, and apparently the most devoted, defender of the United Irishmen. Curran, after a friendship of forty-three years, spoke of his 'uncompromising and romantic

fidelity,' and Curran's son has left an emphatic testimony to his 'many endearing traits.' Yet all this time he was in constant secret correspondence with the Government, and there are, I believe, not less than 150 of his letters in the Castle of Dublin. He received strangely little for his services. Though an excellent lawyer, and a man of much undoubted ability, he was overwhelmed with debts, which were largely due to his supposed politics.[1] In letter after letter he describes himself as reduced to utter destitution; but from time to time he obtained from the Government some small subsidy, which extricated him from his immediate difficulties. It was doled out, however, with a most tardy, penurious, and uncertain hand.[2] At last, his crowning reward arrived in the form of a secret pension of 300*l.* a year, which was disclosed after his death. Had his politics from the beginning been of a different type, his professional talents would probably have raised him to the bench.

The interest, the singularity, and the melancholy of his career will certainly be enhanced by reading his letters. Written for the most part in great haste, with-

[1] In one of his letters to the Government he writes: 'Why will not —— answer my request? I am in deep distress for money. He can inform you of my services. I had no resource but in the assistance of my friends. Everything professional is lost on account of my politics.' (Jan. 9, 1797.) In recommending McNally for a pension, Cooke (if he was the writer of the paper in the Cornwallis papers) adds: 'He was not much trusted in the rebellion, and I believe has been faithful.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 320.)

[2] The smallness of his subsidies is very remarkable. In one letter he says: 'P. [Pollock] assured me some considerable time ago that the L. Lnt. had promised me 200*l.* a year for the life of myself and children, yet I still remain without having this business settled.' (J. W., Sept. 3, 1796.) Shortly after, Pollock writes that J. W. should have some money for Cork. A guinea a week had been stipulated. 'He has not got anything for the last twenty weeks.' (J. Pollock, July 9, 1796.)

out regular beginning or ending, but in the most beautiful of handwritings and in the tersest and happiest English, they reveal with great fidelity a strangely composite character, in which the virtues of impulse seemed all to live, though the virtues of principle had wholly gone. Though his revelations were very important, it was evidently his object to baffle plots without injuring individuals, and he retained all the good nature and native kindness of his disposition. He retained also, to a very remarkable degree, the calmness and independence of a most excellent judgment, a rare discrimination in judging the characters of men and the changing aspects of events. From no other quarter did the Government obtain so many useful warnings, and if the advice of McNally had been more frequently listened to, some of the worst consequences of the rebellion might have been avoided.

The country was now passing, with a portentous rapidity, into a condition of hopeless moral and political disorganisation, and disaffection was spreading through all classes. The memorial of Wolfe Tone, which had been brought in evidence against Jackson, and which was presented to the French Government in the beginning of 1796, described it as completely ripe for revolution. The Protestants of the Established Church alone, he said, supported England, and they only comprised about 450,000 of the population. The Protestant Dissenters, whom he believed to be twice as numerous, and who formed the most intelligent portion of the middle class, were almost all republicans. Republican ideas had spread widely among the Catholic leaders; and the bulk of the Catholic peasantry, 'who had been trained from their infancy in an hereditary hatred and abhorrence of the English name,' and were in a condition of the most abject misery, had almost all passed into the organisation of the Defenders. The picture

seemed an exaggerated one, but McNally assured the Government that it was 'justly conceived and accurately written.' 'The whole body of the peasantry,' McNally said, 'would join the French in case of an invasion, or rise in a mass against the existing Government if any men of condition were to come forward as their leaders; and in either of these events,' it was very doubtful whether the militia or even the regular army could be fully depended on.

'The sufferings of the common people,' he continued, 'from high rents and low wages, from oppressions of their landlords, their sub-tenants, the agents of absentees, and tithes, are not now the only causes of disaffection to Government, and hatred to England; for though these have long kept the Irish peasant in the most abject state of slavery and indigence, yet another cause, more dangerous, pervades them all, and is also indeed almost universal among the middle ranks, by whom I mean the upper classes of artists and mechanics in the cities, and farmers in the country. This cause is an attachment to French principles in politics and religion lately imbibed, and an ardent desire for a republican Government. Rest assured these principles, and this desire to subvert the existing Government of the country, are more strongly rooted, and more zealously pursued by the Roman Catholics, than even by their teachers and newly acquired allies, the Dissenters. A contempt for the clergy universally prevails. Deism is daily superseding bigotry, and every man who can read, or who can hear and understand what is read to him, begins in religion as in politics to think for himself.' This is shown, not only by the language of the peasants, and by the rapid spread of Defenderism, but also by the contempt with which Archbishop Troy's address against the Defenders was generally received, though it was read publicly by the priests from the altars. 'This

address, which, a few years ago, would have operated with the terrors of thunder on an Irish congregation of Catholics, is now scoffed at in the chapels, and reprobated in private. . . . So sudden a revolution in the Catholic mind is easily accounted for. I impute it to the Press. The publication of political disquisitions, and resolutions by the societies of United Irishmen of Belfast and Dublin, written to the passions and feelings of the multitude, affected them with electrical celerity. These papers prepared the way for Paine's politics and theology. Several thousand copies of his various writings were printed at Belfast and Cork, and distributed gratis. . . . I am assured, and I believe it to be true, that in the county of Cork, Paine's works are read by the boys at almost every school, and that in most houses they now supply the place of the Psalter and Prayer Book.'[1]

The United Irishmen, whose meetings had been forcibly suppressed in 1794, reconstructed their society, in 1795, on a new basis, and it now became distinctly republican and treasonable. An oath of secrecy and fidelity was substituted for the old test, and great precautions were taken to extend and perfect its organisation. The inferior societies, which had at first consisted of thirty-six, were now composed of only twelve members each, and an elaborate hierarchy of superior directing committees was created. There were lower baronial committees, upper baronial committees, district and county committees, and provincial directories, each being formed of delegates from the inferior bodies; and at the head of the whole there was a general executive directory of five members, elected by ballot

[1] J. W., Sept. 12, 1795 (Irish State Paper Office). In order to shorten my references, I may mention that all the letters of McNally referred to in the following pages are in the collection of private and confidential correspondence in Dublin.

from the provincial directories, sitting in Dublin, and entrusted with the government of the whole conspiracy. The oath bound the members to form a bond of affection between Irishmen of every opinion, and to endeavour to obtain a 'full representation of all the people.' This phrase was substituted for 'an equal representation of the people in Parliament,' which was used in the original test, and the suppression of all mention of Parliament was not without its significance. In order to preserve secrecy, the names of the members of the supreme directory were only communicated to a single member of each provincial directory, and orders were transmitted from committee to committee by a secretary appointed in each. Emissaries were sent out, and much seditious literature disseminated, to propagate the system. A subscription of one shilling a month was paid by every member. Nightly drilling took place in many districts; arms were collected, and the prospect of a French invasion was kept continually in view. According to the Government information, there were sixteen societies in Belfast, a vast number in the counties of Antrim, Down, Derry, Armagh, and Dublin, and between two and three thousand in all Ireland. At Cork, the Government was informed, there were, in 1795, about 600 United Irishmen—'shopkeepers, merchants' clerks, one or two physicians, farmers residing in all parts of the county, and very young men who attend for the pleasure of debate. . . . They are mostly Protestant. The mayor and sheriffs are suspected of being friendly to them.'[1]

Contempt for the Irish Parliament, and distrust of constitutional agitation, were rapidly spreading. In the beginning of September, Grattan, Ponsonby, Curran, and one or two other leaders of the parliamentary

[1] *First Digest of the Reports on the United Irishmen and Defenders* (Record Office).

Opposition, had a very private conference with the principal members of the democratic party among the Dissenters and the Catholics, which (probably through the medium of McNally) was speedily reported to the Government. Several of the leading Dissenters were there, and six Catholics, including Keogh and Byrne. Grattan spoke to them of the dangerous state of the country, the spread of Defenderism, and the necessity of forming a plan of action for the next session of Parliament, and he suggested an aggregate meeting of all classes, and an address to the King. The project was received with much coolness, and Grattan soon saw that he would receive no support. He can hardly have been ignorant of the hopes and sympathies of some of those who were before him, and his language to them, —even as it appears through the untrustworthy medium of a secret Government report—seems to me to have been very honourable to him, and excellently calculated to influence the kind of men he was addressing. He said he would not persevere in the plan which he had prepared, since it found so little favour, but he also said, 'every exertion should be made to put an end to the spirit of insurrection, and to resist invasion, as the French would merely treat Ireland in a manner most calculated to weaken England; that they would halloo the lower class against the higher, and make the whole country a scene of massacre; that in a year or two, it would be given up by the French again to Great Britain, and that the convulsion would be the ruin of the country.' 'My reporter,' writes Cooke to Pelham, 'had the whole from a leading man of the Catholics who was present. They consider it as a plunge of Grattan's, who they think in a cleft stick. You will be cautious of mentioning how this information comes to you.'[1]

[1] Cooke to Pelham, Sept. 3, 1795. (*Pelham MSS.*)

Much more serious than the United Irish movement, was the rapid spread of Defenderism among the Catholic peasantry. It radiated in the first instance from the county of Armagh, and grew out of the local quarrel between Protestants and Catholics, but, as we have already seen, it almost immediately lost in most places its first character, and became a revived Whiteboy system, with the very serious difference, that a strong political element now mingled with it, through the belief that a French invasion was the most probable method by which its different objects might be attained. Numerous letters in the Government correspondence, show the terrible rapidity and simultaneity with which it broke out in many counties, the various forms of outrage that were perpetrated, the manner in which all agrarian and ecclesiastical grievances were drawn into the system, and the utter demoralisation that it produced. 'One of the first acts of violence,' said Lord Camden, 'and of system, was to put all the smiths into requisition, compelling them to make pikes and spears, some new, and others out of old scythes.' Parties went about plundering gentlemen's houses of arms, and their information was so good, that it was evident that they were in correspondence with the servants. There were instances of servants quitting their master with tears, saying that they would be murdered if they remained. In many parts of Leitrim, Sligo, Galway, Longford, and Mayo, depredations were taking place in the early summer of 1795. In Roscommon, the great graziers were 'so afraid of their cattle being houghed and killed, that they yielded to the demands of the people, by agreeing to raise their wages and lower the rent of the potato ground.' 'Both these measures,' writes Camden, 'were very just and necessary in themselves, but very improper and impolitic, forced, as they were, by intimidation,' and the concession naturally gave an immense

encouragement to the rioters. 'In Galway,' it was noticed, 'there was not an equal pretence for discontent, the rent of the potato ground being lower, though the wages were higher,' and the disturbances there were, for a time at least, quelled when the adjournment of Parliament enabled the principal gentlemen of the county to return to their estates. The usual Irish type of an agrarian code contrary to the law of the land, and enforced by outrages, was very apparent. The rioters 'summoned people to appear before Captain Stout, the nickname for their leaders, and settled differences about wages and rent by a jury, and imposed fines.' 'I fear,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'there is too general an expectation among the common people, of some good that they are to derive from fraternity, and they have lately assumed the name of brothers, and they are encouraged with the hope of being what they call up, or getting uppermost, which is totally unconnected with any religious sentiment, except so far as it serves as a pretext for influencing them at particular times.'[1]

The circle of disorder in a few weeks spread over Meath, West Meath, and Kildare. Emissaries, it was said, 'swear the lower Roman Catholics to secrecy, and to the French when they land,' and there were nightly meetings, and constant robberies of firearms. In most of the counties in Ireland the better sort of people showed but little energy, and there were many large districts without a single important resident gentleman. Very much, therefore, was thrown on the Central Government, who were obliged, as far as they could, to create 'an artificial, if they cannot establish a natural, civilisation.' 'The greatest pains appear to be taken to infuse a spirit of discontent through all the lower

[1] Camden to Portland, May 28, 1795.

orders of people;' and although the disturbances were not likely to be seriously dangerous unless an invasion took place, they made it impossible to withdraw the troops. From the North it was reported, that Defender lodges were everywhere multiplying, the principal one being at Armagh. There was an active correspondence kept up, but never through the post office. Everywhere the Defenders were administering unlawful oaths and seizing arms. They were accustomed to burn the turf and root up the potatoes of those who refused to be sworn, cut down plantations for pike handles, dig up meadows, level banks, hough cattle, rob or set fire to houses, ravish or murder. In eight months there were 147 acts of murder, robbery, or rape, in the single county of Longford. All the Protestants for forty miles round Carrick-on-Shannon were disarmed. Bodies of Defenders numbering 2,000 or 3,000 appeared in arms, and no less than thirteen counties in the course of this year were infected. There were notices put up threatening all who paid tithes or taxes, or let potato grounds for more than four guineas an acre. There were attempts to regulate the price of land and lower priests' dues. According to one proclamation, labour was to be paid one shilling a day for half the year, and tenpence a day for the other half, and though tithes might be paid to the clergymen, they might not, under pain of death and destruction of goods, be paid to tithe proctors or tithe farmers.[1]

The Government were very anxious to ascertain whether there was any connection between the United Irishmen and the Defenders; but after several hesitations of opinion, Camden at this time acknowledged himself unable to discover any clear proof of such connection. A careful digest was made of the evidence

[1] June and July letters.

relating to both societies, and a comparison was sent over to England of their plans and objects. Personal representation, Camden said, was an aim peculiar to the United Irishmen. Using signs and catechisms was peculiar to the Defenders; and abolishing taxes and Church cess, lowering the priests' fees, lowering the prices of land, of potatoes, and of meal, raising the price of labour, equalising property, and restoring Popery, were Defender objects, of which there was no trace among the United Irishmen. The characteristics or objects common to both were fraternising, numbering their committees, naming delegates, providing by all means pikes and guns, seducing the military, abolishing tithes and royalties, separating the two kingdoms, expecting assistance from France, looking forward to a general rising.

The outrages came and went, and sometimes almost disappeared in some of the infected counties, but then again broke out in neighbouring districts. On the whole, in the latter part of the year they appear to have perceptibly diminished, but they were still very serious, and wherever they had appeared, they left behind them sedition and demoralisation. 'It is difficult,' wrote Camden, 'to overcome the impression, so general in the kingdom, of its inhabitants considering it a conquered country, and the jealousy of the English can only be lessened by the greatest attention to the interests of the lower ranks, who in many parts of the kingdom are grievously neglected.' He suggested that the old power once exercised by English justices at quarter sessions, of proportioning the price of labour to that of food, might be of great use in Ireland.[1]

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[1] Camden to Portland, Sept. 25, 1795. 'Defenderism,' wrote Cooke at this time, 'puzzles me more and more; but it certainly grows more alarming daily, as the effect of executions seems to

At a trial of some militiamen for having leagued themselves with the Defenders, it came out in evidence that many had taken the Defender oath, simply because they then obtained a certificate which enabled them to travel throughout the kingdom free of expense, being lodged and provided with food gratuitously by their colleagues. 'To establish a solemn league,' wrote one informant, 'with gradations and authority, seems to be their first object; . . . and this league is confined to Roman Catholics, and directed in the most violent degree against the whole body of Protestants, . . . whose extirpation they confess to be resolved.' 'By their extreme ferocity, of which there are too many horrid instances, they have established such an ascendency over the lower orders of people, that Government has never been able to obtain an entire scheme of intelligence.' Labourers were prevented from working except at rates established by Defenders. Petty juries could not be relied on in Defender cases. Arms were never refused, except by some of the gentry. The Protestants in many of the disturbed parts were wholly disarmed. No traces had yet been found of any French correspondence, but the whole movement was evidently preparatory to a rising in case of French invasion. A great desire was shown to seduce the military and militia, but both had on the whole been very loyal. At Enniskillen, however, nine soldiers of the South Cork Militia had been found guilty of Defenderism, and there were a few other cases. No one with any stake in the country seemed involved in the movement, and

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be at an end, and there is an enthusiasm defying punishment. The secret committee of gentlemen in West Meath have this day recommended the taking up and sending off, as sailors, the suspected, as the only way left to act. The late punishments of informers has struck such terror, that they cannot hope for legal conviction.' (Cooke to Pelham, Sept. 12, 1795.)

the proclamations were evidently the work of very illiterate men. 'Alehouse keepers, artisans, low schoolmasters, and perhaps a few middling farmers, seem to be the leaders in the country and in the provincial towns, and inferior Roman Catholic priests its principal instigators.' In Dublin, Defenderism had taken great hold of the weavers in the Liberties, and generally of the lower mechanics. Many attempts had been made to tamper with the soldiers, and many deserters were concealed in the Liberties, and supplied with money and employment as weavers.

No direct communication, said the same writer, has been discovered between the Defenders and the United Irishmen. The latter are simply acting on the principles of pure French democracy, while the former are actuated by a great variety of motives. The successors of a class of people who had never been much attached either to the Government or to the landed proprietors, they had now caught the contagion of the seditious doctrines of the time, while religious animosities, and impatience of political restrictions, intensified their discontent. Under these circumstances, the soil was fully prepared for an explosion, and a provincial dispute between the Presbyterians and Papists proved sufficient to annihilate any little regard for good order that remained.[1]

The tension of anxiety in some parts of Ireland was intolerable, and it continued unabated for several years. Country gentlemen and respectable farmers found life impossible without a military guard, while among the lower classes conspiracy in many districts was universal, though it is probable that most of the conspirators took the Defender oath merely in order to save themselves from depredation. The whole framework of society,

[1] *Second Digest of Letters relating to Defenderism.*

and all the moral principles on which it rests, seemed giving way. Habits of systematic opposition to the law were growing up; outrages, sometimes of horrible cruelty, were looked upon merely as incidents of war, and savage animosities were forming. It is difficult, in a tranquil and well-organised community, adequately to realise the strain of such a state of society on the nerves and characters even of the most courageous men. Isolated, or almost isolated, in the midst of an alien population, not knowing whom they could trust, or how far the conspiracies around them extended, with perpetual rumours of invasion, rebellion, and intended massacre floating around them, the Irish country gentlemen were supported by none of the fierce excitement which nerves the soldier in the hour of battle. McNally mentions the acquittal, in Londonderry, by a jury of wealthy men, of several persons charged with Defenderism, against the evidence and a strong charge by the judge. The judge ordered the sheriff to post up the jurors' names in the court house, as of persons unfit to serve in future. The sheriff obeyed, and several of the jurors determined to bring actions against him for libelling them.[1]

In Kildare, which had hitherto been a very peaceable and prosperous county, with a large resident gentry, the Defender movement almost assumed the dimensions of a rebellion, and it was noticed that some of the magistrates against whom the popular feeling ran most furiously, were Catholics.[2] The magistrates in this county appear to have acted with great energy, and Lawrence O'Connor, a Naas schoolmaster, was, with some others, found guilty of administering an oath to be true to the French. He appears to have been leader of the movement. Desperate attempts were made by

[1] J. W. to Pelham, Sept. 17, 1795. [2] Plowden, ii. 537.

several hundred armed men to rescue him. Vengeance was vowed against all who were concerned in his arrest, and one magistrate was three times fired at, and severely wounded. The law, however, was carried out, and O'Connor was hanged. He was evidently a genuine enthusiast, and after his condemnation he made a speech to the court, which is very interesting as explaining the motives that inspired him. There appears to have been nothing in it either of politics or of religion. He dwelt exclusively on the miseries and grievances of the poor—landholders refusing land for cottages, rack rents, land jobbers, potato plots let for six guineas an acre. In the course of his speech, there was an incident which could hardly, at such a moment, have occurred out of Ireland. Judge Finucane interrupted the prisoner by saying, that he at least 'had always let his lands to cottagers, and not to men who relet them to rack renters, by which his tenants prospered.' 'God bless your lordship for that!' exclaimed O'Connor; 'you will yet feel the benefit of it; but you must allow there are few rich men like yourself in the country.' McNally, who was engaged in the defence, relates that O'Connor, after his condemnation, was offered a provision for his family if he would make discoveries. He answered, 'He who feeds the young ravens in the valley, will provide for them.'[1]

[1] J. W. to Pelham, Sept. 17, 1795. An interesting account of this trial will be found in Walker's *Hibernian Magazine* for November 1795. The judges appear, as far as I can form an opinion, to have tried the case both fairly and mercifully. In the *Pelham Correspondence* there is a letter from the Castle giving some further particulars. 'O'Connor was executed yesterday at Naas. He was extremely penitent, acknowledged the veracity of the witnesses against him, and the justice of his sentence. The Roman Catholic clergy refused to attend him at the time of his execution, or to administer the Sacraments to him. His carcase is buried in the courtyard of the gaol, and his head is to be set up upon a pole in the front of the building.' (S. Hamilton, Sept. 8, 1795.)

One of the most enduring effects of these disturbances was the diminution of the influence of the gentry over their tenantry. I have in former chapters described at some length the agrarian circumstances of Ireland, and it is constantly necessary, even at the risk of wearisome repetition, to keep these circumstances before our eyes, and to watch their obscure and often most perplexing changes, when relating political events. As we have already seen, the actual owner of the soil, in Ireland, rarely made or directly paid for improvements, but he threw the task of making them upon large tenants, who on this condition received great tracts at very low rents, on leases for lives, sometimes renewable for ever on the payment of a small fine at the fall of each life,[1] but more frequently extending over fifty, sixty, seventy, or even eighty years. This system of land tenure grew out of the social and political conditions of the country at a time when the population was exceedingly scanty, and whatever may have been its disadvantages, it was at least not in any sense inequitable. After the first few years, the contract was exceedingly lucrative to the farmer, and an undisturbed enjoyment for perhaps half a century, amply compensated him for his original outlay. By a remarkable series of laws known as 'the Timber Acts,' the Irish Parliament endeavoured to encourage planting, by giving tenants for life, or for years, a partial or absolute property in the trees they planted. The first of these Acts entitled them to one-third, and the second

[1] At the time of the Devon Commission, it was estimated that one-seventh of Ireland was held under this tenure, and there were complaints that landlords, who found the rent paid to them absurdly below the value of the land, frequently availed themselves of the negligence of tenants or of technical flaws to break these contracts. (*Digest of Evidence on Occupation of Land*, i. 232, 233.)

to one-half, of these trees. A third gave them the entire property in them, provided they were publicly registered, and it enabled them to cut them down at the expiration of the lease or at the maturity of the timber, unless the landlord or reversioner elected to purchase them at a price settled by a jury of freeholders at the sessions. A fourth Act still further extended the power of the tenant, enabling him to cut down, sell, and dispose of the trees he had planted, if duly registered, at any period during the term of the lease.[1]

It was under this system that most of the improvements in Ireland appear to have been made,[2] and if the first tenants had continued to occupy and to cultivate the soil, Ireland would have had one of the most flourishing tenantries in Europe. In some cases this actually happened. The great grazing farmers, whose condition contrasted so strongly with that of the small tenants, were probably often original tenants. Under any circumstances, however, it would be a rare thing, amid the many vicissitudes of life, for an original tenant

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[1] 8 Geo. I. c. 8; 9 Geo. II. c. 7; 5 Geo. III. c. 17; 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 39.

[2] Another method was thus described by a very competent authority. 'Lord Redesdale, once Lord Chancellor in Ireland, states that leases with covenant of perpetual renewal arose in Ireland, instead of fee farms, in consequence of persons purchasing improvable estates, without having money to carry on their improvements, and then procuring it in this manner: they paid, for example, 15,000*l.* for an estate, and conveyed it to another in fee simple for 10,000*l.*, taking a lease of the whole, with covenant for perpetual renewal, at a rent equal to the interest of the 10,000*l.*' (Ferguson and Vance's *Report on the Tenure and Improvement of Land in Ireland*, 1851, p. 8.) It is probable that, in the early part of the eighteenth century, the improvements were almost always made by the leaseholders. In Arthur Young's time there were evidently many very enterprising and improving landlords. In modern times the drainage works have been in general chiefly paid for by the landlord, and a considerable proportion of other improvements are often made jointly by landlord and tenant.

and his descendants to remain attached to the same farm for seventy or eighty years; and it was almost inevitable, when the demand for land had increased, and when the long leaseholder found a great margin between his profits and his rent, that he should have proceeded to sub-let. If he was a man of an inferior stamp, he did so in order to become the idle, sporting, dissipated, and worthless squireen so graphically described in the pages of Young. If he was a man of energy and ambition, he probably took the same course, for he obtained a considerable profit rent from his sub-tenant, and was thus enabled, with the advantage of a secure, independent income, to enter into the paths of trade or professional life. A very competent writer in 1787 has noticed that it was chiefly these large leaseholders who 'formed that middle race of men from which the bar, the pulpit, and the public offices are supplied with their most distinguished ornaments.'[1]

Sometimes too, but especially in the later years of the century, the great leaseholder was put over an estate which was already subdivided into numerous small tenancies, in order to act as the managing agent, and to secure without trouble a fixed and steady though moderate income to the landlord, instead of a larger but fluctuating income collected with difficulty from small tenants. Sometimes he was a land jobber, who made it his business to take large tracts of land at a low rent, subdividing them, and letting them to small tenants at a great profit; and very often he was a con-

[1] *Considerations on the present Disturbances in Munster*, by Dominick Trant (1787). Settlements in Ireland, says the same writer, 'almost always leave the possessor of the estate a power of leasing for three lives or thirty-one years; the farmer taking a lease for lives (as was always the case amongst Protestant farmers, and is now the general usage since the late relaxation of the Popery laws), chooses them among the healthiest of his own children or those of his neighbour.'

sequence of the embarrassments of the landlord.[1] It was a common thing for an owner who desired to raise at once a large sum of money, to offer as an equivalent a long lease at a very low rent, or to reduce the rent of an existing leaseholder. A great proportion of the low perpetuity rents which are so common in Ireland, may be traced in this way to the necessities of a spendthrift heir. From one or other of these causes it resulted, that by far the greater part of Ireland was let by the landowner at long leases, and at rents so low that sub-letting was almost universally profitable, and the controlling power and management passed out of the hands of the owners, into the hands of men of a

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[1] Whitley Stokes described the middleman as made 'necessary by the indolence of the landlord, who will not be at the trouble of judging for himself of the character and responsibility of his tenants, nor of keeping small accounts. He is a most expensive agent, as his profit generally amounts to 7*s.* in the 1*l.*' (*Projects for re-establishing Internal Peace in Ireland*, by Whitley Stokes, 1799, p. 6.) Archbishop Magee, in his funeral sermon on Lord Clare, eulogised him for having always refused to surrender the peasants on his estate to the middleman, who 'views the cultivator like the clod he tills, but as a subject of profitable traffic,' and who 'constitutes one of the most perniciously operating causes of the wretchedness' of the poor. (Magee's *Works*, ii. 389.) 'This most pernicious system of middlemen,' says another well-informed writer, 'originated in the idleness and poverty of the Irish gentry. A gentleman involved in extravagance, and unable to provide for his immediate wants, would often let a portion of his estate on a long lease at a rent as small as three, four, or five shillings an acre, on condition of receiving a sum of money at the moment. The immediate lessee, either too proud or too lazy to cultivate this land himself, would let it on lease to another at a profit rent of ten or fifteen shillings an acre; and the next lessee would dispose of it at an advanced rent to a third person, until at last the most ignorant and indigent of the people became the occupiers and cultivators of that land, which, in the hands of an English yeoman, would have produced double the quantity of what it was in their power to make it yield.' (Bell's *Description of the Peasantry of Ireland between* 1780–1790 [1804], p. 37.)

much lower social type.[1] But below the landlord and below the first tenant, land was again and again sub-let, and in these lower grades the competition became so fierce, the system of 'canting,' or putting up farms to auction without any regard to the old tenants, was so general, that rents were forced up to the highest point, and the cottier who held a little plot of potato ground from the farmer, and worked out his rent by labour, was one of the most miserable of mankind.

This economical condition was by no means peculiar to Ireland. We have already seen it in Scotland, and it may probably be found in the early agricultural history of many countries, but the special circumstances of Ireland had contributed to aggravate it. The old legislative destruction of manufactures, and the depressing

[1] Miss Edgeworth, in her very instructive sketch of the farming system at the close of the eighteenth century, says: 'There was a continual struggle between landlord and tenant upon the question of long and short leases. . . . The offer of immediate high rent, or of *fines to be paid down* directly, tempted the landlord's extravagance, or supplied his present necessities at the expense of his future interests; and though aware that the value of improvable land must rise, or that he was letting it under its actual value, yet if the landlord was not resident on his estate, and if he merely wanted to get his rents without trouble, he was easily tempted to this imprudence. Many have let for 99 years, and others, according to a form common in Ireland, for three lives renewable for ever, paying a small fine on the insertion of a new life, at the failure of each. These leases, in the course of years, have been found extremely disadvantageous to the landlord, the property having risen so much in value that the original rent was absurdly disproportioned. . . . My father, in the course of his life, saw the end of two leases of 99 years. . . . In these and all cases where long leases had been granted, he did not find that the land had been improved by the tenants, or that they felt any gratitude for what had been originally desired and granted as a favour. On the contrary, long possession had made the occupier almost forget that he was a tenant, and consider his being forced to surrender the land at the expiration of the lease as a great hardship.' (*Memoirs of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 21–23.)

influence of certain portions of the penal code, had thrown too many for subsistence on the soil, taken away some of the chief spurs to industry, and produced moral effects which continued long after the laws that created them were repealed. Absenteeism not only drew away a large proportion of Irish rents to England or to Dublin; it also produced or rendered possible many infamous abuses in the management of property. The tithe system, and especially the exemption of graziers, was exceedingly unfair to the poor, who were compelled to support the clergy of two religions, and the county cess, which was levied by the grand juries, and chiefly paid by the occupying tenants, was often scandalously excessive and scandalously misapplied.[1] It is admitted, indeed, on all hands that Irish roads were exceedingly good, but many of the contracts for making them appear to have been grossly corrupt. Not unfrequently, it is said, grand jurors got for their own tenants contracts for making or repairing portions of road at twice the proper price, and the tenants were thus enabled to pay off, out of public money, arrears of rent.[2] Parliamentary taxation, on the other hand, was very light, and after the repeal of the penal laws the Irish Parliament, as we have seen, showed no disposition to throw the burden unduly on the unrepresented classes. The hearth tax was the only direct tax paid by the poor, and in the latter years of the century about

[1] In a very able pamphlet, called *Lachrymæ Hibernicæ, or the Grievances of the Peasantry of Ireland*, published in 1822 by Ensor (the author of a remarkable book on moral philosophy), it is said that about that date, 'in many parishes the grand jury cess exceeds the whole amount of the money collected for tithes, in the proportion of three to one, sometimes more. This is the case, with few, if any, exceptions, in the province of Connaught.' (P. 16.) See, too, O'Driscoll's *Views of Ireland* (1823), ii. 394–396.

[2] See the description of the system in Miss Edgeworth's *Absentee* (c. x.), and in the *Life* of her father (ii. 31, 32).

two millions of persons appear to have been exempted from paying it.[1] A very low standard of comfort, extreme and barbarous ignorance, the early and improvident marriages which naturally accompany these conditions, and the gregarious and domestic habits which made multitudes cling desperately to one small spot, often of miserable soil, were the real root of the evil, and great moral changes were necessary before it could be removed.

The agrarian changes which took place after the completion of the penal code, and before the accession of George III., consisted chiefly of violent fluctuations in the proportion between arable and pasture land, resulting from fluctuations in the price of cattle. Since the accession of George III. powerful political influences had come into play. Such were the Octennial Act, making it a more pressing interest for landlords to multiply the voters upon their estates; the legislation of 1778, enabling Catholics to take leases for lives, instead of being restricted to leases for thirty-one years; the legislation of 1782, bringing Catholic purchasers into the land market, and the corn bounties, which, in conjunction with the English demand for corn, greatly raised the value of land, and made Ireland an essentially arable country. The Dublin Society laboured with zeal and intelligence, during the greater part of the century, to correct the extreme ignorance of agriculture that generally prevailed among the farmers; and I have mentioned the desire which Arthur Young noticed, and

[1] 'Of these millions [the Catholic population of Ireland], it is a known fact that two millions one hundred thousand are, by the late Hearth Money Act, excused, on account of poverty, from paying a tax of about fourpence a year each to the State.' (Mr. R. Johnson, *Irish Parl. Deb.* xv. 278. According to Mullalla (*View of Irish Affairs*, ii. 202, 203), about a million and a half were exempted.

so warmly praised, among the more improving landlords and in the more prosperous parts of the country, to put an end to the system of middlemen when leases fell in, and to bring the occupying tenant into immediate relations with his landlord. This was a great advantage to the landlord, and in general a still greater advantage to the tenant, who usually found the farmer of his own race and creed immeasurably more oppressive than the Protestant gentleman; but, as I have already hinted, it had political and social effects which were not so good. Removing a connecting link between the highest and lowest classes, it brought two classes into direct juxtaposition who were deeply separated by religion, by race, and by bitter memories of old confiscations. It also altered in some degree the character of the management of land, placing it much more than formerly in the hands of bailiffs and 'drivers,' who had no direct interest in the soil.[1]

It must be added, too, that a great wave of extravagance had lately passed over the gentry, both of the first and second degrees. The sudden rise in the value of land which followed the American war and the corn bounties; the substitution of annual for biennial sessions of Parliament, which led to an increased residence in Dublin;

[1] The arguments in favour of middlemen are stated powerfully, but with, I think, an undue leaning towards the middlemen, in the *Lachrymæ Hibernicæ* (p. 23). Writing in 1822, the author describes the middlemen as having 'nearly disappeared.' There is an excellent account of the different classes of middlemen, in Ferguson and Vance's *Report on the Tenure and Improvement of Land in Ireland* (1851). These writers, after speaking of the extortionate rents exacted from the undertenant, say, what is, I believe, indisputably true: 'These rents were higher, were sooner called for, and more rigidly exacted, in proportion as the middleman descended in the scale of society, and approximated to the degree of the peasant.' (P. 184.) On the other hand, the middlemen often took their rents in produce or labour, and this system was not unpopular in Ireland.

and also the more extravagant hospitality which became the fashion during the administration, and through the example, of the Duke of Rutland, are said to have been the chief causes. The volunteer movement, which obliged many country gentlemen to raise large loans upon their land, added seriously to the encumbrances of property ; and when the war broke out, great changes occurred. A very competent writer has expressed his belief, that in the twenty or thirty years from 1790, more land was sold under decrees, than during the preceding eighty years.[1]

This was certainly by no means an unmixed evil, and in many cases it was the large leaseholders who became the owners. A very large part of the present smaller landowners of Ireland are probably the descendants of tenants, who originally held their land under leases, and at last obtained possession of it subject to the payment of a small head rent. Two other closely connected agrarian changes, however, of a much more doubtful character, took place at the same time—a raising of rent perhaps more rapid and general than in any other period of Irish history, and a great subdivision of farms.

Of the first fact there can be no doubt but it is an extremely difficult, if not an impossible tning, to measure with accuracy its amount and its consequences. Looking broadly over Irish agrarian history for the last two centuries, it may, I think, be confidently asserted that it has not been the general custom of the real owners of Irish land to ask the full market, or competitive, rent from their tenants. This custom has prevailed, and does prevail, over a great part of the continent of Europe, and in Ireland it has prevailed

[1] See a very able pamphlet, called *A Detail of Facts relating to Ireland for the last Forty Years* (Dublin, 1822), p. 62.

to a terrific extent, in the relations of the middlemen and the farmers with their sub-tenants and cottiers, but the rent paid by the tenant to the landlord has usually been governed by other principles. This is the conclusion which must, I think, be forced upon everyone who reads the account of Arthur Young in the eighteenth century,[1] and it is the conclusion at which the best contemporary investigators have also arrived.[2] It does not rest merely on the testimony of isolated and, perhaps, prejudiced observers. As I have already urged, it is proved beyond all reasonable doubt by the fact that, for more than a century, the immediate tenant almost invariably sub-let his tenancy at an enhanced rent, and that the same process was continued two or three deep; and also by the fact that, wherever it has been the custom to allow the tenant to sell his right to occupy his farm on the terms agreed on with his landlord, this sale of tenant-right has become a constant and

[1] I have examined this subject more fully (vol. ii. pp. 5–8). In Dean Tucker's tract on *Union or Separation*, which was written in 1785, but published by Dr. Clarke in 1799, there is an interesting note on the agrarian system in Ireland. The writer notices (pp. 11, 12) that the rents received in Ireland by the owners in fee, are 'extremely low and moderate,' but that the rents paid by the actual cultivators are much higher than in England. He says: 'The great tracts of land that are given in lease, and divided by the lessee, to be subdivided by other lessees, until the cottager is crushed by the number of those he has to support above him, is a sore and crying evil.'

[2] Thus the Bessborough Commission in 1881 summed up the results of a careful examination into this point. 'Though the amount of rent was always at the discretion of the landlord, and the tenant had, in reality, no voice in regulating what he had to pay, nevertheless it was unusual to exact what in England would have been considered as a full or fair commercial rent. Such a rent over many of the larger estates, the owners of which were resident, and took an interest in the welfare of their tenants, it has never been the custom to demand. The example has been largely followed, and is, to the present day, rather the rule than the exception in Ireland.' (*Report*, p 3.)

lucrative transaction. In our own day we have seen a number of valuable legal rights, which, a few years ago, incontestably belonged to the landlord, transferred without compensation by English legislation to the tenant, with the result, that an estate which, in the eyes of the law, was the sole property of the nominal owner, and which, in innumerable cases, had been recently sold to him by the Government itself, under a parliamentary title, has become, both in law and in fact, a joint property of landlord and tenant. I do not here dilate upon the essentially confiscatory character of this legislation. I refer to it only because it has been mainly justified on the ground that the rights of tenants, which recent legislation has established, had, for many generations, been generally recognised by custom, though entirely without the sanction of the law. We can hardly have a more striking illustration of the blindness and the dishonesty that party spirit can produce, than the fact that the very politicians who have contended that such rights should be transferred by law, on the ground of immemorial usage, have also, in many instances, described the men on whose properties such rights had for generations existed without legal sanction, as a class of rapacious and extortionate tyrants.

These facts are, indeed, quite compatible with great and general faults of negligence on the part of the landlord class, with many instances of casual oppression, and with much defect of sympathy between the landlord and tenant, but they are not compatible with a state of society in which the relations between these two classes are generally regulated on the principles of strict competition. There have been, however, short periods in Irish history which were, in this respect, exceptional, and in which the sharp competition that existed in the lower stages of the Irish land markets

extended to the direct relations between landlord and tenant, and there is reason to believe that the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century formed such a period. The corn bounties and the war prices had raised suddenly and immensely the profits of farming, and the landlords were becoming acutely sensible of how large a proportion of the profits of their estates had been intercepted by middlemen. A traveller mentions one case—which was probably by no means extraordinary—of a single large middleman, who derived a revenue of not less than 4,000*l.* a year from the difference between the rent which he paid to the owner of the soil and the rent which he exacted from his subtenants.[1] It appeared from an inquiry instituted in 1799, that cottiers paid in rent to the farmers on an average three times as much, and sometimes four times as much, as the farmer paid for the same quantity of land to the landlord;[2] and as the old leases fell in, the pernicious system of canting, which had long flourished in the lower strata of the agrarian community, began to extend widely to the dealings of landlords with their tenants.

It is stated, indeed, by some considerable authorities, to have been at this time extremely general. Thus, when the Catholics complained, in 1793, that without the suffrage they were at a disadvantage as farmers, because Protestant landlords naturally gave the preference, in the competition for farms, to those who could support them at the elections, Duigenan answered: 'It was now the almost universal mode of letting land in Ireland, for the landlord to advertise his lands at the expiration of a lease, to be let to the best and highest bidder, and to let them accordingly, without considering

[1] Hoare's *Tour in Ireland*, p. 308.

[2] Whitley Stokes's *Observations on the Population and Resources of Ireland* (1821), pp. 25–27.

the religion of the tenant, but merely his solvency and the price he offers.'[1] 'There is hardly an estate,' said Ogle a few years earlier, 'which is not let to the highest penny, and much above its value.'[2] This may refer mainly to the dealings of middlemen with sub-tenants; but Crumpe, who published in 1793 his 'Essay on the best Means of Employing the People,' strongly maintained, in opposition to Arthur Young, that 'the proportionate rent' derived by the landlord was higher in Ireland than in England. It is true, he said, that the middlemen 'are the class from which the poor principally experience that oppression to which, we have asserted, they are still subject,' but he described the system pursued by the landlords when leases fell in, as wholly different from that in England. 'When a lease is expired, in place of such an amicable adjustment [as takes place in England], the lands are advertised to be let to the highest bidder; the proposals of each are kept secret, and by this unfair species of auction, a promise of exorbitant rent is obtained, very frequently to the exclusion of the former occupier, who is considered as having no stronger claim to them than the most perfect stranger, unless he exceed him in the amount of the proposed rent.'[3]

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[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xiii. 114.

[2] Ibid. vi. 435.

[3] Crumpe's *Essay*, pp. 232–235. The reader may find some more information on the subject, and a very strong statement of the extent to which 'canting' prevailed, in a pamphlet called *Reflections on the best Means of securing Tranquillity, submitted to the Country Gentlemen*, by P. Winter, Esq. (Dublin, 1796.) As early as 1731, Dobbs stated that, 'Agents, particularly of those noblemen or gentlemen who reside in England, or at a distance from their estates, who have been empowered to treat with tenants and give leases, to ingratiate themselves with their employers . . . have, in some places, taken proposals sealed up, under a promise to divulge none of the names but that of the person who offered most, whose proposal was to be accepted.' (Dobbs *On Irish Trade*, part ii. p. 79.)

Several other almost equally emphatic statements may be collected, especially from the speeches and writings of those who endeavoured to defend the tithe system in Ireland, and who usually made it their object to prove that rent rather than tithe was the great burden on the poor. That these statements were far too general, appears to me evident. The great part which leaseholders played in the management of estates, gave them enormous advantages in bargaining for renewals with a negligent landlord class. The records, traditions, and customs of most Irish estates, and the judgment of the most careful investigators, will, I believe, show that a long continuance of the same families as tenants on the same estates[1] has been at least as characteristic of Ireland as of England; and the fact, which appears universally admitted, that agriculture in all its gradations was steadily improving in the last decades of the century, proves that though rents had risen rapidly, they had not reached a point which is incompatible with prosperity.[2] Much of the change probably took place only

[1] See, e.g., the remarks of Dr. Sigerson (a writer who is violently prejudiced against the landlord class), on the confidence of the tenants on some large estates, 'in a good old modus—namely, that their land would never be given to another tenant [on the expiration of their lease], so long as they were able and willing to pay a reasonable raised rent.' (Sigerson's *Hist. of Land Tenures in Ireland*, pp. 296, 297.) See, too, Miss Edgeworth's account of her father's policy in renewing leases. (*Life of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 15, 16.)

[2] Newenham, in his *View of the Circumstances of Ireland*, published in 1809, says: 'About thirty years ago, when Mr. Young travelled through Ireland, the average price of day labour was $6\frac{1}{2}d.$ It now appears, by the statistical surveys of sixteen counties, by parochial returns from three others, and by information from different parts of the rest, to be $10\frac{1}{2}d.$ So that in thirty years it has risen about two-thirds, which is infinitely more than it had risen in any former period of equal extent. . . . Since the year 1782, the rent of land, which, a short time before that year, had begun to fall in many places, has been much more than doubled in all parts of Ireland one with another, more than trebled in many.

in the upper tenancies, and left the condition of the occupiers of the soil unaltered; and it must be added that, within certain limits, the raising of rent was not merely consistent with, but powerfully productive of, increased agrarian prosperity. Arthur Young—who considered the rental of Ireland in his time abnormally low—is but one of many observers, who noticed how little the system of long leases at very low rents contributed to the prosperity of the country and the comfort of the tenants. It was remarked that it was precisely on estates so situated that there was most subdivision and least improvement, the most slovenly cultivation, and the lowest standard of comfort, and that they often presented in these respects a striking contrast to adjoining estates let at reasonable rents and for terms of twenty-one years.[1] It must be added also, that the

. . . If Mr. Young . . . was grounded in computing the rental of Ireland at six millions in 1778, there can be no hesitation in stating it as upwards of fifteen millions at present, exclusive of the ground rent of the houses in the different towns. . . . Since the year 1782, the imports have more than doubled; the exports also, if the real value be taken, have more than doubled.' (Pp. 230–234.) Crumpe, while maintaining that the rental of Ireland was unduly high, acknowledges at the same time that 'The situation of the peasant has, since the pacification of the kingdom, but more especially since the settlement of its constitution in 1782, been daily improving.' (*Essay on the Employment of the Poor*, p. 201.) Miss Edgeworth's father, writing about 1808, and resuming his experience of Ireland since 1769, says: 'Since the time of which I write, the people of Ireland have improved more than any other people in Europe.' (*Life of R. L. Edgeworth*, i. 229.) See, too, his daughter's testimony (ii. 1, 2); and the facts I have myself collected, vol. ii. pp. 494–496.

[1] This is very emphatically stated in Ferguson and Vance's *Report on the Relation of Landlord and Tenant in Ireland* (1851), p. 62. I may add two authorities who will not be suspected of any landlord prejudice. Wolfe Tone writes in his diary: 'A farm at a smart rent always better cultivated than one at a low rent—probable enough.' (Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 148.) Theobald McKenna, in his Essay on Parliamentary Reform, which was published in 1793, says: 'In several parts of Ireland the

period we are considering was not a period of great evictions, dissociating an agricultural population from the soil. When pasture-land was gaining on tillage, a great displacement of population necessarily occurred. But with the strong impetus towards tillage in the closing years of the eighteenth century, the tendency was reversed, and there was therefore as yet no want of farms for industrious farmers.

The process of subdivision, and the rapid increase of population which accompanied it, had begun, and the most powerful motives, moral, economical, and political, were hastening the change. The priests, partly from considerations of morality, and partly from obvious considerations of self-interest, have always encouraged early marriages; and the strong domestic feeling, which is one of the most amiable characteristics of the Irish peasant, has always led the Irish farmer to desire to settle his children on detached portions of his farm. The increase of tillage, through the English demand for corn, through the corn bounties, and through the high prices that followed the war, made it for the advantage of the landlords to take the course which was incontestably the most popular, and place no restraint upon subdivision. The bias of the law was in the same direction. It was still the prevailing belief, that a rapidly multiplying population was the first condition of national

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rents have been tripled, nay quadrupled, within forty years past. And this was not so much the effect as the cause of national prosperity, for the great wealth of a country may frequently lie dormant, if the inhabitants, residing listlessly upon the surface, will not exert themselves to investigate its resources. Before the above-mentioned period, when rent was very low and other taxes little known, half the year was lavished in carousing. But so soon as labour became compulsory, fortunes have been raised both for the tenantry and landlords, and the civilisation of the country has advanced materially.' (McKenna's *Political Essays*, p. 187.)

prosperity. Clauses in leases forbidding sub-letting under penalties, were looked upon as tyrannical, and contrary to the public interest. The law courts frequently decided against their validity; the difficulty of obtaining formal legal proof of sub-letting was very great, and it was found almost impossible to induce juries to find verdicts enforcing the penal covenants.[1]

Whitley Stokes, who decidedly favoured the movement of subdivision, and whose tracts throw much light upon this period of agrarian history, gives an illustration of the process which was going on. 'A gentleman in the county of Cork,' he says, 'made a fortune by purchasing or renting large tracts of land, and setting it in as small portions as the people wished. He informed me in the year 1798 that he had eighty tenants, who paid each 12*l.* or less for their entire rent, and he found that they paid more regularly than those who had larger farms,[2] and he thought this was generally the case in the county of Cork. . . . It very seldom happened in his neighbourhood that the immediate occupiers of the land broke; they who did were oftener farmers who paid from 50*l.* to 100*l.* a year, than those who paid 12*l.* or under.' Stokes insists much on the value of small farms in preventing mendicancy, and he adds some remarks which, coming from an excellent man of science, whose sympathies were strongly popular, and who actually joined the United Irishmen through the purest motives of philanthropy, throw an instructive light on the ideas of the time. He considered that the gentry erred rather by repressing than by encouraging sub-

[1] See the remarks of Mr. H. Jephson, *Notes on Irish Questions*, p. 25. It was not till after the war, that this policy was reversed. See, too, Ferguson and Vance's *Report*, pp. 178–189.

[2] Arthur Young had noticed that the smaller farmers were 'the best pay' on the estates, 'the intermediate gentleman tenants the worst.' (*Tour in Ireland*, ii. 99.)

letting, and that the system of middlemen was highly advantageous to the country. 'If we could prove,' he says, 'to the satisfaction of impartial persons, that further subdivision of land is valuable to the working people of Ireland, and that they are willing to pay largely for the advantage, it is not to be wondered at, that the landlords should be slow to adopt such a plan. They dread with reason the dealing with great numbers of the lower class of people. The attempt is painful, hazardous. It is not every gentleman who is fit for it. Fortunes have been made by this process, but the difficulties will not be encountered by those who have inherited property, and have been reared in refinement or indulgence. This state of things produces the middleman. The middleman is necessary to Ireland, as the shopkeeper is necessary to London. The London consumer cannot deal conveniently with the merchant, nor the Irish small farmer with the nobleman or gentleman who possesses a large estate. . . . If you impede the appointment of middlemen, there will be fewer small farms, and higher prices will be given for them. . . . So far from discouraging middlemen, I would venture to recommend again, as I did twenty-one years ago, that a company should be formed for purchasing estates as they came to market, and subdividing them.'[1]

The Act of 1793, granting votes to Catholic forty-shilling freeholders, gave an additional impulse to the movement of subdivision, by making it the interest of each landlord to multiply the votes that he could command. By many writers, indeed, this Act has been represented as the main cause, but this view is a gross

[1] Stokes's *Observations on the Population and Resources of Ireland* (1822), pp. 29–31. Edgeworth seems to have been one of the few landlords who set his face against subdivision, by inserting in all his leases, and stringently enforcing, 'alienation fines.' (*Memoirs*, ii. 17, 18.)

and manifest exaggeration.[1] When the tenant class were anxious to subdivide, and when the landlord class had strong economical reasons for allowing them to do so, the result could hardly have been doubtful, and political motives can have only slightly accelerated it. Land jobbers multiplied in the last years of the century, because the trade had become very profitable; leaseholders subdivided because it was their plain interest to do so, and in similar circumstances similar evils will inevitably appear. It is not necessary to look to remote or barbarous countries for a parallel. In the last few years, parliamentary inquiries have disclosed exactly the same evils, springing from the same cause, in great districts of London and of our provincial towns. We find there, all the leading features of the Irish agrarian system at the close of the eighteenth century: landlords who have let their land for a long period, and have thus lost all power of management and control; leaseholders who, as the pressure of population becomes more intense, find it their interest to subdivide their holdings into minute fractions; a whole race of speculators in poor men's dwellings; rents forced by the competition of the very poor to an enormous height; an excessive congestion of population; an utter neglect of the conditions of comfort and health. In Paris, under land laws very different from those of England, precisely similar signs have appeared. An excellent observer, who has lately described the condition of the overcrowded workmen's quarters there, writes: 'The wretched houses they contain, are generally constructed by a speculator of a low order, who has taken the land at a long lease, and built, in the most economical and defective manner, cabins of wood and plaster, which he lets at exorbitant prices—

[1] I have seen it stated, that the subdivision of farms was nowhere greater than on glebe and other Church lands, where political motives can hardly have applied.

140 or 200 francs a year for a room. He obtains from his speculation 20 to 25 per cent., which assures him a little fortune at the expiration of his lease, especially if he has also carried on the trade of spirit dealer. . . . It is curious to observe the analogy between these Paris quarters and the pestilential courts in London, where a principal tenant, who also makes 20 to 25 per cent. by the transaction, and who holds his houses under a very long lease, extorts enormous rents from wretched sub-tenants.'[1]

It is not less curious, I think, or less instructive, to trace the analogy of these things with the excessive subdivision of land, the rapid rise of rents, and the multiplication of a pauper tenantry in Ireland in the closing years of the eighteenth century. The change was still far from its maturity, and the effects were as yet very various. Farmers who held their farms under leases made before the corn bounties and the war, made rapid fortunes. The high price of farm produce, increased wages, and the general alteration of all the conditions of agriculture, opened out many paths of wealth to skill, enterprise, cunning, and industry; but the great majority of the Irish farmers had none of these qualities, and the sudden rise in rents and prices, and the displacement of old tenants by others who offered larger rents, contributed much to swell the agrarian discontent which found its expression in the Defender outrages. At the basis of the Irish agrarian system there was still a great mass of abject poverty, and it is by no means certain that it had diminished. The price of labour had indeed risen considerably, but not in all parts of the island, and there had been a considerable and general rise in the price both of oat-

[1] Much evidence on this subject is collected by M. Raffalovich in his very valuable little work, *Le Logement de l'Ouvrier*. See especially pp. 97, 138, 139, 269, 270.

meal and potatoes, the two principal articles of the food of the labourer.[1] The pictures of the misery and the oppression of the cottiers and migratory labourers, which I have extracted from writings twenty or thirty years earlier, might all be paralleled in the period we are considering; and if the area of prosperity was enlarged, reckless marriages, and the consequent rapid increase of population, were then, as always, most conspicuous among the most wretched, the most ignorant, and the most improvident. It was still true that, at the beginning of every autumn, the roads were crowded with barefooted and half-naked mountaineers, who were travelling on foot 150 or 200 miles, to work for the harvest in England, where they commonly fell into the hands of contractors known as 'spalpeen brokers,' who distributed them among the farmers, intercepted a substantial part of their scanty wages, and imposed on them an amount of labour which few West Indian planters would have exacted from their negroes.[2] It was still true, that it was a common thing for large farmers, whose land included barren mountain tracts, to place cottiers on these lands in order to reclaim them, and to turn them adrift as soon as by hard labour they had made them productive.[3] It was still true,

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[1] See the report of a committee to inquire into the state of the labouring poor, appointed by the Whig Club in 1796. (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 246–248.) Whitley Stokes was of opinion that, though the price of labour had nominally risen, it had not done so in proportion to the cost of provisions. The landlord and the farmer, he said, were doing well, through the increase of the value of land and farm produce, but not the cottier. (*Projects for re-establishing Internal Peace in Ireland.* Dublin, 1799.)

[2] See Bell's *Description of the Condition and Manners of the Peasantry of Ireland between* 1780 *and* 1790 (London, 1804), pp. 10–12—a book of great and painful interest—and also the report of the Whig Club on the state of the labouring poor. (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 246–248.)

[3] Bell's *Description*, p. 7. In that remarkable book, *Uncle Pat's Cabin*, by Upton, which is one of

that cottiers were often obliged to work out the extravagant rents that were charged for their potato plots, at the rate of fourpence and fivepence a day; that their sole food, in many districts, was potatoes mixed with the milk that remained when the butter had been made; that during part of the year they were often reduced to potatoes and water; and that even potatoes could not always be counted on.

In one of the tracts of Whitley Stokes, there is a terrible picture of the condition of the poorest Irishmen, at a time which has been considered the most prosperous in Irish history. 'Generally,' he wrote, 'the cottier has but an acre. Sometimes, I know it from personal inquiry, in situations remote from any town, he pays three guineas a year for a house whose first cost was certainly not five, and a rood of ground. In some places the cottier pays four times the rent of the farmer, and in one place where this happened, the cottiers were so distressed, that they could afford themselves but one meal a day, and that consisted of potatoes and of butter milk, for which they paid a penny a quart, and they could never afford to procure themselves turf; and that place was the hill of Oulart,' the spot in Wexford where the most formidable portion of the rebellion of 1798 took its rise. In many places, the same writer tells us, the poor were exposed to a variety of diseases, and especially to putrid diseases, from the poorness of their diet or the exclusive use of the potato. 'In Kerry,' he says, 'they live so low, that I am assured by a medical man, that the addition of any small quantity of butter to their potatoes, is used as a cordial when they are ill, with evident advantage.' [1]

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the truest and most vivid pictures of the present condition of the Irish labourer, exactly the same grievance is described as still existing.

[1] Whitley Stokes's *Projects for re-establishing Internal Peace in Ireland*, p. 9. One of the prin-

This mass of extreme and chronic poverty was now beginning to surge with wild and indefinite hopes, and busy missionaries were actively fanning the flame. As outrages multiplied, the landlord had every inducement to leave his estate, and the system of tenure existing in Ireland made his absence peculiarly easy. Since the world began, no large class of men have ever discharged efficiently, dangerous, distasteful, and laborious functions, if they had no inducement to do so except the highest sense of duty, and this was rapidly coming to be the position of the landlord, whose lot was cast in the midst of the anarchy of Defenderism. It was not a natural thing that a landlord should have great power, when his land was placed beyond his control by the system of long leases, and the authority which Irish landlords had for so many years exercised under this system, was to a great degree artificial. Among the many contradictions and anomalies of Irish life, nothing is more curious than the strong feudal attachment and reverence that frequently grew up between the resident Protestant landlord and his Catholic tenantry, in spite of all differences of race and creed and traditions. It is a fact which is attested by everything we know of Irish life in the eighteenth century, and it subsisted side by side with the Whiteboy outrages, with vivid memories of the old confiscations, and with many other indications of war against property. The country gentleman

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cipal causes of the rebellion, though not hitherto mentioned by any person, is the extraordinary increase in the population of Ireland, which has furnished an opportunity to greedy jobbers in land to raise the price of small farms infinitely beyond their real value. This has brought distress, poverty, and disaffection on the wretched peasantry, who are under an absolute necessity (from their total want of all other means of existence), to promise whatever rent their immediate landlord shall fix upon their hovel or little farm.' (R. Griffith to Pelham, July 31, 1798. *Pelham MSS.*)

had many qualities, not all of them very estimable, that were eminently popular among the people—a lavish hospitality, keen sporting tastes, great courage in duels, a careless, thriftless, good-natured ostentation, a tone of absolute authority and command, mixing curiously with extreme familiarity, in dealing with inferiors; a great knowledge of their character, and a great consideration for their customs and prejudices. In the management of his property there was a combination of negligence and indulgence, which has always been peculiarly popular in Ireland. His kitchen was open to all comers from his estate; he seldom or never interfered when his tenants wished to settle their children on a portion of his land, or insisted on much punctuality of payment, and he laid great stress on hereditary attachment to his family. The pride of family and of county influence was nowhere stronger than in Ireland, and it was fully shared by the humblest dependant.

The feudal spirit was clearly reflected in the customs and contracts of land. Clauses were constantly inserted in leases, obliging tenants to furnish their landlords with horses or labour for several days in the year, or with tributes of poultry, turkeys, or geese; there were sometimes clauses, which fully coincided with the political ethics of the Irish tenant, obliging the leaseholder to vote always with his landlord; there was the curious custom of 'sealing money'—a perquisite given to the squire's wife by the tenant on the sealing of their leases.[1] The penal code concentrated immense magis-

[1] Miss Edgeworth describes most of these customs in *Castle Rackrent*. See, too, the very curious and instructive pictures of Irish country life, in her continuation of the life of her father, and also in *Ormond* and the *Absentee*. A gentleman informed me, only a few years ago, that he found the clause relating to votes in one of his old leases. Maxwell's *Wild Sports of the West* belongs to a somewhat later period, but it illustrates, I believe very truly, the kind of feeling that often prevailed between the gentry and their tenants.

terial and administrative powers in the hands of the landlord class, and formed a tradition which long survived the laws, while the middlemen diverted from them much of the unpopularity which in times of distress might have attached to them. The landlord was the arbiter of innumerable disputes; he often exercised his influence as magistrate to protect his tenants who were in difficulties through faction fights or illicit distilling, and they in their turn were always ready to keep the bailiff from his door. There was on neither side much regard for law, but the landlord usually maintained both his authority and his popularity.

A governing type was developed in the class, which was very remote from modern English ideas, but which was well adapted to the conditions under which they lived. The admirable picture which Miss Edgeworth has drawn in 'Ormond,' of the relations between King Corney and his people, will enable the reader to understand it. The Irish landlords were able, without the assistance of any armed constabulary, to keep the country quiet during the greater part of the eighteenth century, even in times of war, when it was almost denuded of troops. They again and again suppressed Whiteboy disturbances, by parties raised among their own tenantry; and when they placed themselves at the head of the volunteer movement, the nation followed them with enthusiasm. A class who were capable of these things may have had many faults, but they can have been neither impotent nor unpopular.

I have already quoted the well-known description, which Arthur Young gave in 1779, of the absolute authority exercised at that time by a Protestant landlord over his Catholic tenantry. 'The power and influence of a resident landlord,' he said in another place, 'is so great in Ireland, that whatever system he adopts, be it well or ill imagined, he is much more able to introduce

or accomplish it, than Englishmen can well have an idea of.'[1] But under the influence of the Defender movement, this state of things in many districts was rapidly changing. How great an alteration had taken place in fifteen years, is clearly shown by the diagnosis which Camden sent to England of the causes of Irish disturbances. 'From the nature of the tenures they grant,' he writes, 'the gentry who inhabit this kingdom have not the weight they might otherwise have in the country. From the uncultivated state of considerable parts of the kingdom, the landlords are induced to give leases for years under the terms of houses being built and improvements made upon the land. This mode puts the tenant out of the power of the landlord, and he considers himself as possessing such a right in the land, and for so long a term, as to make him extremely indifferent to the good opinion of his lord; and in proportion as feudal notions have been dissipated, the rights of man have been promulgated, and these independent tenants have opportunities enough of being informed of the little influence which their landlords have over them. These persons having seen that, in times of danger, England has been induced to give way to the threatening appearances in this country, they are encouraged by the possibility of their being again able to carry their favourite notions by a perseverance in tumult and outrage, which they conceive will weary instead of exasperate the more quiet parts of the kingdom.'[2]

These last words might have been written in our own day, and they illustrate curiously the persistence of the same morbid influences in Irish affairs. The state of the country required strong remedies, remedies beyond the law as it was administered in England.

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[1] Young's *Tour*, ii. 105. [2] Camden to Portland, Sept. 25, 1795.

Nothing can be more fatuous than to suppose, that it is possible to govern a disaffected country on exactly the same principles or by the same methods as a loyal country; that organised crime, taking a form nearly akin to rebellion, and supported by the sympathies of a great portion of the population, can be mastered by a machinery which is intended only to deal with the isolated instances of individual depravity. It was perfectly reasonable, too, and perfectly in accordance with the best English precedents, that new outbursts of crime should be encountered by special laws of unusual severity. Such had been in England the 'Stabbing Act,' attributed to the frequent quarrels between English and Scotch at the Court of James I.; the 'Coventry Act' of Charles II. against maiming and disfiguring the person; the 'Waltham Black Act' of George I., intended to repress the cruelties and depredations of the Hampshire poachers. Legislation of this kind has been frequent in Ireland, and it may be abundantly justified. At the same time, it was the first duty of the Government, in combating the spirit of illegality, to be itself legal, and no more fatal blow could be given to the cause of order, than for those who were charged with supporting it, to defy the restraints of the law. This was what actually happened in Ireland. Lord Carhampton was charged with the pacification of Connaught, and under his direction the magistrates took a great number of those whom they suspected of being Defenders, and without sentence, without trial, without even a colour of legality, they sent them to serve in the King's fleet—a tender sailing along the coast to receive them.[1]

[1] Plowden, ii. 537, 538; Grattan's *Life*, iv. 240; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 112. Lord Camden says: 'A measure which, I am afraid, is not very defensible, and to which I have taken the utmost care not to give either my own individual con-

The measure was as completely illegal as the proceedings of the Defenders themselves, and it must not be confounded with an ordinary press. It was not professional sailors, but for the most part agricultural labourers, many of whom had never even seen the sea, who were suddenly torn from their families and their homes, and sent to the war-ships, to pestilential climates, and to a great naval war. To such men the fate was more terrible than death, and if the measure produced for a time the tranquillity of consternation, it left behind it the seeds of the most enduring and vindictive animosity. It has been stated, that more than one thousand persons were thus illegally transported. In general the victims and their friends were too poor and helpless to seek legal redress, but in a few cases writs of Habeas Corpus were applied for and granted, when the Government interposed, and induced Parliament to pass an Act of indemnity stopping the prosecutions, and legalising all that had been done. Thus, in the words of Grattan, 'the poor were stricken out of the

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sent or that of Government, has contributed very much to alarm these persons [the Defenders]. The magistrates in several districts, not finding that the regular mode of endeavouring to convict these offenders had the effect which was expected, have, in cases where they were convinced of the guilt of the person, sent them on board the tender, and entered them for the King's service. I am afraid some of the magistrates have been incautious enough, not to carry on this measure so secretly as to have escaped the notice of the public. . . . It has certainly, however, done much to quiet the country, and I shall of course take care to protect these gentlemen as far as I am enabled with propriety to do so.' (Camden to Portland, Nov. 6, 1795.) In another letter he speaks of 'the proceeding of the magistrates in sending *acquitted* Defenders to sea;' and adds: 'Lord Carhampton, whom I sent during the last year into the province of Connaught, found it necessary to act in some instances in a summary manner, and certainly did not confine himself to the strict rules of law.' (Ibid. Jan. 22, 1796.) See, too, the letter I have quoted, p. 389, *n.*

protection of the law, and the rich out of its penalties.'[1]

In the meantime, another and most formidable and persistent element of disturbance was growing up in the North. The year 1795 is very memorable in Irish history, as the year of the formation of the Orange Society, and the beginning of the most serious disturbances in the county of Armagh.

It is with a feeling of unfeigned diffidence that I enter upon this branch of my narrative. Our authentic materials are so scanty, and so steeped in party and sectarian animosity, that a writer who has done his utmost to clear his mind from prejudice, and bring together with impartiality the conflicting statements of partisans, will still, if he is a wise man, always doubt whether he has succeeded in painting with perfect fidelity the delicate gradations of provocation, palliation, and guilt. The old popular feud between the lower ranks of Papists and Presbyterians in the northern counties is easy to understand, and it is not less easy to see how the recent course of Irish politics had increased it. A class which had enjoyed and gloried in uncon-

[1] 36 Geo. III. c. 6. Writing to Pelham, Camden says: 'The country is much quieter, and I believe Lord Carhampton's *doctrine* has done a great deal of good, although he has carried it on rather too publicly. I understand he will certainly have actions brought against him for his conduct in Roscommon; and I think it probable that this measure is so notorious, that it will be a subject for parliamentary inquiry, and that a Bill of indemnity may be necessary to cover the magistrates, who have exerted themselves so zealously and yet so indiscreetly.' (Camden to Pelham, Oct. 30, 1795.) In a pamphlet, which had a great circulation, defending Lord Carhampton's treatment of the Defenders, it is said: 'If it please your Excellency to permit them to go to war with us, and will permit us only to go to law with them, it will not require the second sight of a Scotchman to foretell the issue.' (*Consideration of the Situation to which Ireland is reduced by the Government of Lord Camden*, 6th edit. 1798.)

tested ascendency, found this ascendency passing from its hands. A class which had formerly been in subjection, was elated by new privileges, and looked forward to a complete abolition of political disabilities. Catholic and Protestant tenants came into a new competition, and the demeanour of Catholics towards Protestants was sensibly changed. There were boasts in taverns and at fairs, that the Protestants would speedily be swept away from the land and the descendants of the old proprietors restored, and it was soon known that Catholics all over the country were forming themselves into committees or societies, and were electing representatives for a great Catholic convention at Dublin. The riots and outrages of the Peep of Day Boys and Defenders had embittered the feeling on both sides. In spite of the strenuous efforts of some of the principal gentry of the county, and especially of Lord Charlemont and Mr. Richardson, and in spite, too, of the hanging or public flogging of several culprits of both creeds, these riots had continued at short intervals for ten years before the Orange Society was established.[1]

Members of one or other creed were attacked and insulted as they went to their places of worship. There were fights on the high roads, at fairs, wakes, markets, and country sports, and there were occasionally crimes of a much deeper dye. At a place called Forkhill, near Dundalk, a gentleman named Jackson, who died in 1787, left a considerable property for the purpose of educating a number of children of the Established

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 510, 511. Many curious particulars about these riots, and the means taken to suppress them, will be found in a manuscript, *Historical View of Orangism*, in the Stowe MSS. in the Irish Academy. See, too, a pamphlet bitterly hostile to the Government, but written with considerable knowledge, called, *A View of the present State of Ireland, and of the Disturbances in that Country.* (London, 1797.)

Church as weavers or in other trades; providing them with looms when their education was finished, and settling them upon the estate. No displacement of old tenants was contemplated, but some park and waste land was colonised with industrious Protestants; and the terms of the will directed, that when vacancies occurred, the pupils in Jackson's schools should be settled in small holdings in preference to other claimants. The object was to plant a nucleus of industry and order in the midst of a savage, bigoted, idle, and entirely lawless population, who seem to have been allowed for many years to live and to multiply, without any kind of interference, guidance, or control.

Among the trustees of the charity was a very intelligent and liberal-minded clergyman named Hudson, who was an intimate friend, and a frequent correspondent, of Lord Charlemont. In an interesting letter, written at the end of 1789, he describes how he was endeavouring to introduce some decent manufacturers into this wild district, and what formidable obstacles he encountered. 'I hope,' he adds, 'to make our savages happy against their will, by establishing trade and industry among them.' He noticed 'how many traces of savage life' still remained in the population; 'the same laziness and improvidence, the same unrelenting ferocity in their combats, the same love of intoxication, the same hereditary animosities, handed down from generation to generation. Add to this, that they are all related to each other, and I believe there are not at this moment ten families in the parish which are not related to every other in it. . . . It unfortunately happened that this estate was for thirty-five years possessed by the most indolent man on earth. He kept more than half of it waste during that time, on which they, in fact, subsisted. The idea of its being let, set them mad. A report has been industriously spread, that

several of the old tenants had been dispossessed, and that this gave rise to a combination here. I do most solemnly assure your lordship, that in no one instance has even an acre been taken from any man. . . . They were not only continued in their old possession with some addition, but an abatement of rent to the amount of 117*l.* was to have been made them at the very time they broke out, and some hundreds of arrears were actually forgiven. All would not do. They found some Protestants had taken land, whom they determined to drive out. They therefore assembled the Defenders from all parts of the country, and struck such horror that none of those Protestants but half a dozen ever appeared here afterwards.'[1]

The school, however, still went on and flourished, and at last, in the beginning of 1791, a long series of outrages culminated in one of those ghastly crimes which make men's blood boil in their veins. A very excellent Protestant schoolmaster named Berkeley was the most successful of the teachers. Hudson notices that, though he was only paid by the trustees for teaching sixty scholars, he had for six months been teaching upwards of a hundred without any additional charge. At last one evening a party of forty or fifty men entered his house. They stabbed him in several places. They cut out his tongue, and they cut off several of his fingers. They mangled his wife in the same way and in other ways also, and they then proceeded to mutilate hideously a boy of thirteen. No other reason was assigned, except that Berkeley was a prominent member of the new colony which had been planted in the district. The party plundered the house,

[1] Charlemont MSS. (Irish Academy.) See, too, the report of the Endowed Schools Commissioners for Ireland (1858), iii. 460, and the Irish statute, 29 Geo. III. c. 3. Jackson's charity is still flourishing, and celebrated its centenary in 1888.

and they then marched triumphantly along the road with lighted torches. The feeling of the neighbourhood was indisputably with them. Only one of the culprits was brought to justice; he would give no evidence against his accomplices, and he went to the gallows attended by his priest, and maintaining, it is said, all the demeanour of a martyr.[1]

Outrages, however, were by no means confined to one side, and the violent alternation of hope and despondency that followed the appointment and the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, the constant rumours of rebellion and invasion, and the great extension of the Defender movement through Ireland, contributed to aggravate the situation. In the county of Armagh the Protestants were decidedly in the ascendant, but there was a considerable minority of Catholics, who were generally Defenders, and there were numerous collisions between the two parties.

In September 1795 riots broke out in this county, which continued for some days, but at length the parish

[1] See, for the particulars of this crime, a letter of Hudson to Francis Dobbs (Jan. 29, 1791), in the Charlemont MSS., as well as some later letters from Hudson, and from a gentleman named Prentice, to Charlemont. See, too, the documents on the subject collected by Musgrave. (*Rebellions in Ireland*, pp. 59–63.) Colonel Verner related all the circumstances of this crime, before the Parliamentary Committee on the Orange Society, in 1835. (*Report*, quest. 30.) He says, Berkeley asked those who were torturing him, whether he had ever injured them. They said not; 'but this was the beginning of what all his sort might expect.' Colonel Verner says that this crime, and especially this declaration, chiefly produced the hostility to the Catholics in the North. He acknowledges, however, that the Peep of Day Boys had previously existed. During the disturbances of 1798, Dean Warburton wrote urging the expediency of arresting two priests of infamous character, and he mentioned that one of them had been parish priest at Forkhill, and was removed by his bishop, as he was supposed to have been concerned in the outrage on the schoolmaster there. (Dean Warburton to Cooke, May 29, 1798. I.S.P.O.)

priest on the one side, and a gentleman named Atkinson on the other, succeeded in so far appeasing the quarrel that the combatants formally agreed to a truce, and were about to retire to their homes, when a new party of Defenders, who had marched from the adjoining counties to the assistance of their brethren, appeared upon the scene, and on September 21 they attacked the Protestants at a place called the Diamond. The Catholics on this occasion were certainly the aggressors, and they appear to have considerably outnumbered their antagonists, but the Protestants were better posted, better armed, and better organised. A serious conflict ensued, and the Catholics were completely defeated, leaving a large number—probably twenty or thirty—dead upon the field.[1]

It was on the evening of the day on which the battle of the Diamond was fought, that the Orange Society was formed. It was at first a league of mutual defence, binding its members to maintain the laws and the peace of the country, and also the Protestant Constitution. No Catholic was to be admitted into the society, and the members were bound by oath not to reveal its secrets. The doctrine of Fitzgibbon, that the King, by assenting to Catholic emancipation, would invalidate his title to the throne, was remarkably reflected in the oath of the Orangemen, which bound them to defend the King and his heirs 'so long as he or they support the Protestant ascendency.'[2] The society took

[1] See, for the particulars of the battle of the Diamond, the *Parliamentary Report* of 1835 on the Orange Association, questions 80–84, 8937–8955. See, too, McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 114, 115; Plowden, ii. 539. Sir W. Verner's *Short History of the Battle of the Diamond*. The evidence collected in the *Parliamentary Report* referred to, furnishes the fullest particulars about the history of Orangism.

[2] The conditional oath of allegiance was exchanged, about 1821, for the ordinary oath, and that was abolished in 1825.

its name from William of Orange, the conqueror of the Catholics, and it agreed to celebrate annually the battle of the Boyne.

In this respect there was nothing in it particularly novel. Protestant associations, for the purpose of commemorating the events and maintaining the principles of the Revolution, had long been known. Such a society had been founded at Exeter immediately after the Revolution. Such a society, under the name of 'The Old Revolution Club,' had long existed in Scotland.[1] In Ireland, too, the Revolution of 1688 was so closely connected with the disposition of property and power, that it naturally assumed a transcendent importance, and the commemorations which are commonly associated with the Orange Society were in truth of a much earlier date. The twelfth of July—which by a confusion between the old and new styles was regarded as the anniversary of both the battle of the Boyne and the battle of Aghrim[2]—and the relief of Londonderry were annually commemorated in Ireland long before the Orange Society existed. From the time of the Revolution till the beginning of the nineteenth century, November 4, which was the birthday of William III., was celebrated in Dublin with the greatest pomp. The Lord Lieutenant held a court, and followed by the Chancellor, the judges, the Lord Mayor, and a long train of the nobility and gentry, he paraded in state round the statue of William III. in College Green. At the drawing-room the ladies appeared decorated with orange

[1] On the English and Scotch societies, see *Orangism, its Origin, Constitution, and Objects*, by Richard Lilburn (1866). The Orange Society at first called itself, 'The Boyne Society, commonly called Orangemen.' See Cupple's *Principles of the Orange Association*, pp. 19, 20.

[2] The battle of the Boyne was fought on July 1, old style, which corresponds to July 12, new style. The battle of Aghrim was fought July 12, old style.

ribbons,[1] and orange cockades were worn by the soldiers. These commemorations were universally recognised as mere manifestations of loyalty to the Constitution and the dynasty, and were fully countenanced by men who were very friendly to the Catholics. The volunteers, who did so much to bridge the chasm between the two sects, held some of their chief assemblies around the statue of William III. Every year, during the great period of the volunteer movement, they met there on the birthday of William, decorated with orange lilies and orange cockades; and the 'Boyne Water' was played, and a *feu de joie* was fired in honour of the occasion. Wolfe Tone has noticed, as a most significant fact, that in 1792, for the first time since the institution of the volunteers, this ceremony was objected to, and omitted. It was on the occasion of the commemoration of July 12, that the Ulster volunteers assembled at Belfast, presented their famous address to Lord Charlemont in favour of the admission of Catholics to the suffrage.[2]

A very different spirit, however, animated the early Orangemen. The upper classes at first generally held aloof from the society. For a considerable time it appears to have been almost confined to the Protestant peasantry of Ulster, and the title of Orangeman was probably assumed by numbers who had never joined the organisation, who were simply Peep of Day Boys taking a new name, and whose conduct was certainly not such as those who instituted the society had intended.[3]

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[1] This was the occasion of Lord Chesterfield's well-known lines to Miss Ambrose:

> Say, lovely traitor, where's the jest
> Of wearing orange in your breast;
> While that breast, upheaving, shows
> The whiteness of the rebel rose?

[2] Compare Gilbert's *History of Dublin*, iii. 40–53; Tone's *Memoirs*, i. 203; Grattan's *Life*, iii. 228; and an article in the *Quarterly Review*, Dec. 1849, on the Orange Society.

[3] The later Orangemen have been extremely anxious to disclaim all connection with the outrages of 1795 and 1796, which they attribute wholly to the Peep

A terrible persecution of the Catholics immediately followed. The animosities between the lower orders of the two religions, which had long been little bridled, burst out afresh, and after the battle of the Diamond, the Protestant rabble of the county of Armagh, and of part of the adjoining counties, determined by continuous outrages to drive the Catholics from the country. Their cabins were placarded, or, as it was termed, 'papered,' with the words, 'To hell or Connaught,' and if the occupants did not at once abandon them, they were attacked at night by an armed mob. The webs and looms of the poor Catholic weavers were cut and destroyed. Every article of furniture was shattered or burnt. The houses were often set on fire, and the inmates were driven homeless into the world. The rioters met with scarcely any resistance or disturbance. Twelve or fourteen houses were sometimes wrecked in a single night. Several Catholic chapels were burnt, and the persecution, which began in the county of Armagh, soon extended over a wide area in the counties of Tyrone, Down, Antrim, and Derry.[1]

On December 28, about three months after the battle of the Diamond, the Earl of Gosford, who was governor of the county of Armagh, and a large number of magistrates of great property and influence, met at Armagh to consider the state of the country. With a single exception, they were all Protestants, and among

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of Day Boys. See the evidence of the Orange leaders before the Parliamentary Committee of 1835, and also Mortimer O'Sullivan's *Case of the Protestants of Ireland*, pp. 173–176. It seems clear that the society was originally founded with a defensive object. On the other hand, the depredators called themselves, and were called by others, Orangemen, and the Peep of Day Boys rapidly merged into Orangemen, and ceased to exist as a separate body. See the evidence of Mr. Christie in the *Parl. Rep.* on the Orange Society, quest. 5575–5578. We shall have further evidence on this matter as we proceed.

[1] *Parl. Rep.* Orange Society, quest. 5567–5600.

them were three clergymen of the Established Church, who were afterwards raised to the bench.[1] The opening speech of Lord Gosford has often been quoted, and it furnishes the clearest and most decisive evidence of the magnitude of the persecution. 'It is no secret,' he said, 'that a persecution, accompanied with all the circumstances of ferocious cruelty which have in all ages distinguished that dreadful calamity, is now raging in this county. Neither age, nor even acknowledged innocence as to the late disturbances, is sufficient to excite mercy, much less afford protection. The only crime which the wretched objects of this merciless persecution are charged with, is a crime of easy proof. It is simply a profession of the Roman Catholic faith. A lawless banditti have constituted themselves judges of this species of delinquency, and the sentence they pronounced is equally concise and terrible; it is nothing less than a confiscation of all property, and immediate banishment. It would be extremely painful, and surely unnecessary, to detail the horrors that attended the execution of so wide and tremendous a proscription, that certainly exceeds, in the comparative number of those it consigns to ruin and misery, every example that ancient and modern history can afford. For where have we heard, or in what history of human cruelties have we read, of more than half the inhabitants of a populous country deprived at one blow of the means, as well as of the fruits, of their industry, and driven, in the midst of an inclement winter, to seek a shelter for themselves and their helpless families where chance may guide them? This is no exaggerated picture of the horrid scenes now acting in this county. . . . These horrors are now acting, and

[1] One of them was Mr. Warburton, Rector of Lough Gilly, afterwards Dean of Armagh, and Bishop of Cloyne, a man who was certainly one of the very ablest magistrates in Ireland. See *Parl. Rep.* 1835, quest. 3251–3277.

acting with impunity. The spirit of impartial justice (without which law is nothing better than tyranny) has for a time disappeared in this county, and the supineness of the magistracy of this county is a topic of conversation in every corner of the kingdom.'

This terrible picture appears to have been fully acquiesced in by the assembled gentlemen. Resolutions were unanimously carried, to the effect that the Roman Catholic inhabitants of the county of Armagh were 'grievously oppressed by lawless persons unknown, who attack and plunder their houses by night, unless they immediately abandon their lands and habitations.' A committee was at once formed, and several measures were taken to repress the disturbances.[1]

It is not to be supposed that the law was silent about such crimes. One of the Whiteboy Acts had already made them capital, and directed the grand juries to grant compensation to the victims.[2] It was said in Parliament, in October 1796, that a considerable number of Catholics had obtained compensation, but it was also said, and apparently with great truth, that these were only a small fraction of the sufferers. The law had the defect of leaving a large option to the grand juries; it seems certain that in some districts, and espe-

[1] Lord Gosford's speech, and the resolutions of the magistrates, will be found in the *Parl. Rep.* of 1835, and have been printed by Plowden (appendix, xcix), and many other writers. When sending the resolutions to Pelham, Gosford wrote: 'Of late no night passes that houses are not destroyed, and scarce a week that some dreadful murders are not committed. Nothing can exceed the animosity between Protestants and Catholics at this moment in this county. . . . When I came here in the month of October, I found the country in a state of extreme disorder, and that of a nature peculiar to itself. The Protestant and Catholic inhabitants were inflamed to the highest pitch of animosity; but the former were greatly superior in strength, and made no scruple of declaring, both by words and actions that could not be misunderstood, a fixed intention to exterminate their opponents.' (I.S.P.O.)

[2] 15 & 16 Geo. III. c. 21.

cially in the earlier stage of the outrages, these showed themselves shamefully apathetic, and the Government were very generally accused of conniving at their apathy.[1] In spite of the resolutions of Lord Gosford and his brother magistrates, the outrages continued with little abatement through a great part of the following year. As might have been expected, there were widely differing estimates of the number of the victims. According to some reports, which were no doubt grossly exaggerated, no less than 1,400 families, or about 7,000 persons, were driven out of the county of Armagh alone. Another, and much more probable account, spoke of 700 families, while a certain party among the gentry did their utmost to minimise the persecutions.

The most conspicuous document of this latter kind with which I am acquainted, is an elaborate and interesting paper, 'On the Disturbances in the County of Armagh,' by Mr. Alexander of Boragh, dated November 1796. This gentleman dwells strongly on the evident and menacing change of demeanour which had been displayed by the Catholics, on the great spread of Defenderism among them, on the conspiracies and outrages of the Northern Defenders in previous years, on

[1] See the remarkable extracts on this subject from the speeches of Parsons, Grattan, and others, in Plowden, ii. 553–557. In the *Pelham Correspondence*, there is a letter from General Dalrymple, dated from near Armagh, 'Aug. 8,' and probably written in 1796. He said: 'The effects of the want of energy at the last assizes have been most severely felt, and total inaction on the part of the magistrates, and despondency on the part of the Catholics, has followed. Many of them are preparing for flight the moment their little harvests are brought in. . . . Their houses are placarded, and their fears excessive. All this I have stated many times to the Government, but no answer have I received. At this moment almost all are absent, and business sleeps. The Catholics conceive the fault to be mine, and that I am partial, and attached to their enemy, supposing me to possess powers not in me. . . . Laws exist, but their explanation and execution are in the hands of those who approve not of them.'

the undoubted fact that the Catholics were the aggressors in the battle of the Diamond. If it had not been, he said, for the Orangemen, and for the issue of that battle, the county of Armagh, with some neighbouring counties, would have been practically under the dominion and the terrorism of committees of Defenders and United Irishmen. He admits that barbarities had been perpetrated by the Protestants, who, for a considerable time after the battle of the Diamond, destroyed the habitations of the Defenders, and would not suffer them to return to their neighbourhood or cultivate their land. He admits also, that some of the gentlemen of the county had shown great indolence and supineness, partly from 'a real desire that the Defenders should be banished from the country, as a set of men hostile to its peace.' The outrages, however, had, he said, been grossly exaggerated, and he believed that the number of families driven from the county of Armagh was less than 200, that the stories of rapes and mutilations perpetrated by Protestants were wholly untrue, and that, exclusive of those who fell in the battle of the Diamond, only about six lives had been lost. Some of the fugitives had been able to return, and many had not fled on account of acts of violence directed personally against themselves. The panic had extended to districts where there had been no actual violence, and prophecies (which needed no supernatural illumination) of great calamities impending over the Catholics, had been widely circulated and readily believed. He adds that, 'not a family left the country without disposing of such tenures as they had of their lands, to the highest advantage.' 'The Orangemen,' he continued, 'are almost entirely composed of members of the Established Church, attached to the established Government of this kingdom, and its connection with England, . . . and all they have of late done, has originated from those attachments,' and from

the jealousies very justly produced by the associations and conspiracies, the language and the conduct of the Defenders. Such men must be prevented from committing outrage, but they must not be treated as disloyal conspirators. The worst acts had been done by 'an armed peasantry, undisciplined and unofficered,' by a small gang of 'boys and idle journeyman weavers,' and 'the name of Orangemen has been frequently assumed by a plundering banditti, composed of all religious denominations, whose sole object was robbery.'[1]

Even in this picture, the colours are sufficiently dark, but the authority of Alexander certainly cannot compete with that of Lord Gosford and the magistrates who assembled at Armagh, and the correspondence in the possession of the Government appears to me, to do little or nothing to attenuate the picture. It was in the beginning of 1796, that Camden first informed the English Government that the Protestants, in the county of Armagh, 'finding themselves the most numerous, have been induced to commit acts of the greatest outrage and barbarity against their Catholic neighbours;' and he adds very significantly, 'this circumstance has been owing to the magistrates of that county having imbibed the prejudices which belong to it, and having been swayed by their predilections in the discharge of their duty.'[2] At the Armagh Assizes which were held at the end of March 1796, Wolfe, the Attorney-General, was present. He appears on this, as on all other occasions, to have discharged his duties with ability, impartiality, and humanity, and the information which was sent to the Government was on the whole encouraging. 'The witnesses of both parties and religions,' wrote a pro-

[1] I.S.P.O. I may here mention, that nearly all the magistrates' letters and other local reports quoted in the following pages, are in Dublin Castle.

[2] Camden to Portland, Jan. 22, 1796.

minent gentleman, 'have, in giving their testimony against each other, displayed a candour and a temperate honesty that bespeak dispositions the most favourable to future peace. Congratulations on that circumstance, and on the fortunate selection of the petty juries, are in the mouths of all parties.' Both Protestants and Catholics sat on the juries, and two Defenders and two Orangemen were capitally convicted. One whole day was occupied in examining the petitions of men whose property had been destroyed by the Protestant banditti. One hundred and fifty persons proved themselves entitled, under the Statute of Compensation, to damages, and rather more than 2,000*l.* was distributed among them. At the same time, Wolfe was sorry to learn that the outrages continued even during the assizes, and that, a few days before he wrote, several houses had been 'papered and pulled down,' near Lurgan.[1]

In the county of Down, the evil seemed extending. 'The wreckers,' wrote a magistrate from that county in June, 'are again at work. Last night . . . they wrecked and destroyed eight houses, used the people with great cruelty, and stole a large quantity of yarn. These fellows disgrace the revered name of Orange by taking it to themselves, and I can safely affirm that getting possession of arms is not their only object, as they have wrecked all and robbed most of the houses they went into. . . . My list of houses burned or wrecked since Armagh Assizes, in this county, amounts to fifty-eight, and I dare say some I have not heard of.'[2]

Another magistrate, writing from Waringstown in the same county, urged that a distinction must be drawn between the Orangemen, who were simply a loyal body enlisted for self-defence, and the depredators who had

[1] The Right Hon. J. Corry to Pelham, April 1, 3; Wolfe to Pelham, April 1, 5, 1796.

[2] J. Waddell, June 14, 20 1796.

assumed the name. 2,500 or 3,000 Orangemen, with many flags and emblems of loyalty, had lately marched through the town. Their conduct was perfectly regular and sober, and they declared themselves 'ready to turn out upon all occasions to assist the civil power.' At the same time depredations of the Armagh type occasionally took place, and 'six or eight people of this neighbourhood, whose houses had been destroyed, got presentments for about 600*l.* to be levied off the parish.' 'I have not a doubt,' wrote this magistrate, 'of Defenderism and that hellish system of United Ireland spreading rapidly through this country. . . . Within these eight days a general terror prevails amongst the Protestants in this neighbourhood that their throats are to be cut by the Papists, aided by the militia, and they now seem to place their salvation on the Orangemen solely. . . . I lament as much as you can, the emigrations that the wrecking of the Roman Catholic houses has occasioned. They will naturally carry with them the strongest resentment for the injuries they have sustained, into a country where their religion preponderates, and retaliation will and must be the consequence. As to the loyalty of the Roman Catholics, I differ from you in opinion. They never can forget that they have been the proprietors of this country, wrested from them and withheld by the strong arm of power. . . . Sorry am I to say, that the establishment of a militia has turned out a most unfortunate measure. . . . They have in general by their behaviour, wherever they have been quartered, disgusted the people beyond measure, and by their actions and declarations have given the strongest proofs of disloyalty.'[1]

In July two Orangemen were capitally convicted at Armagh Assizes. Several others, a magistrate reported,

[1] H. Waring to Cooke, July 23, 1796.

were acquitted, though there was the clearest evidence against them, and in spite of the charges of the judges.[1] 'On the whole,' wrote Lord Gosford about this time, 'this county in all appearance is, in my opinion, in rather a quiet state, and growing more so since the last assizes.' At the same time he adds: 'The people here, I fear, wait for a favourable opportunity to revive the spirit of religious quarrel. . . . On the borders of this county, in the county of Down, outrages, I fear, are getting to an alarming height.' Great Orange meetings with scarfs and banners were held on July 12, and the Orangemen professed themselves very loyal to the Crown.[2]

'As to the Orangemen,' wrote a very efficient magistrate at Dungannon, 'we have rather a difficult card to play; they must not be entirely discountenanced—on the contrary, we must in a certain degree uphold them, for with all their licentiousness, on them must we rely for the preservation of our lives and properties should critical times occur. We do not suffer them to parade, but at the same time applaud them for their loyal professions.'[3]

In September a dreadful tragedy is stated to have taken place near Lord Gosford's residence, and eighteen Catholics, tenants of Lord Charlemont's, were said to have been attacked in the night and killed. I can find no further particulars of this affair, which was probably greatly exaggerated, but the correspondent of the Under Secretary who mentions it, states that the supineness with which it was treated by the Government was much blamed.[4]

Rightly or wrongly, it was believed that the Govern-

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[1] J. Kemmis (Armagh), July 24, 1796.
[2] Lord Gosford, July 10, 1796.
[3] Thos. Knox, Aug. 13, 1796.
[4] Edward Boyle to Cooke, Sept. 6, 14, 1796.

ment wished to interfere as little as possible with the outrages in Armagh. Curran introduced the subject in the House of Commons on more than one occasion, and he tried in vain to induce the ministers to consent to a special inquiry into them. He stated that not fewer than 1,400 families had been driven from their homes; that this system went on in broad daylight, and that the existing law was quite inadequate to remedy the evil. Like Grattan, he believed that nothing short of a compulsory compensation would be sufficient. The debate had a special interest from a speech of Mr. Verner, who represented the extreme Protestant party among the Ulster gentry. He said that the number of the expelled had been enormously exaggerated; that the Orangemen were a very loyal body, and that the outrages they had no doubt committed, had been committed under great provocation. The Catholics in 1795 had systematically attempted to deprive the Protestants of their arms. They had assembled together, in their own language, 'to destroy man, woman, and child of them;' they had treacherously attacked them in the battle of the Diamond, and they had been beaten in open fight. Many, he said, who fled, had been active in the Defender disturbances; and others had gone with the idea of getting cheap land in the West. 'These persons sold the interests of their farms at a high price, and emigrated to the West at the instance of persons who had large tracts of waste land, and employed agents to invite people to take farms from them.' Armagh was now quite quiet.[1]

Some remarks of Pelham, which tended to minimise the importance of these outrages, produced a letter from Lord Moira which gives some very precise and important information. 'The newspapers,' he wrote, 'mention you

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xvii. 147–154. This debate was on Oct. 26 and Nov. 7, 1796.

as having said in your speech on the first day of the session, that the violence suffered by his Majesty's Catholic subjects in the county of Armagh had been much exaggerated. Lest false information should have been designedly given to you upon so serious a point, I cannot but feel it incumbent to assure you, sir, . . . that the outrages have gone to a much greater extent than I ever heard stated in Dublin, and the persecution is even now continuing with unabated activity. I have a detached estate bordering upon the county of Armagh, which, though in an inferior degree, has felt the effects of that licentious barbarity. Upon reading your speech, I deemed it advisable to procure an authenticated account of the number of my tenantry who have been driven within the last year from only four townlands within the parish of Tullylish. I have the honour to inclose a list of ninety-one persons who have been expelled in that manner from their possessions, and I have to add, that most of them have had their little property either destroyed or taken; many of them have been cruelly wounded. . . . The place where this has happened is in the heart of the linen manufactories, and is one of the most industrious parts of Ireland.'[1]

The manner in which religious animosity was fast creating a new line of cleavage, and running counter to the schemes of the United Irish party, is curiously shown in a letter from a gentleman at Omagh. He mentions that after divine service, he had been addressing a meeting of nearly 2,000 Presbyterians on the necessity of forming volunteer corps, in order to resist the French, and also 'the Belfast principle.' The strongest spirit of loyalty, he says, prevailed among them: 'hatred of the Roman Catholics is very great, so much so that should one be admitted in any corps, they

[1] Lord Moira to Pelham, Oct. 19, 1796.

declared they never would join with them, as a spirit of Defenderism and revenge exists in that body against Administration. This violent change has been wrought within the year—a change fraught with the best consequences to our King and Constitution.'[1]

We must now pass to evidence derived from another quarter. The great majority of the Ulster refugees took refuge in Connaught, and Lord Altamount was one of the largest proprietors and one of the most active magistrates in that province. In July 1796, he wrote to the Under Secretary at the Castle. 'The emigration from the northern counties to these parts still continues, and I consider it the more alarming because the extent of it does not seem to be understood, nor the causes to have been sufficiently investigated by Government. . . . I can see most clearly, that the causes and the consequences are highly dangerous to the peace and safety of the kingdom. Plunder, religious prejudices, and a wish for disturbance from disaffection to the State, appear to me to have been the groundwork of the persecution that has been raised against the Catholics. The result has been, that many of the well-affected, many of the industrious, and all of the timid, have fled from the danger that hung over them, and taken refuge where the numbers of their own persuasion gave them more confidence and security. That ill-intentioned persons have mixed with them, I think more than probable; and that they may themselves be ultimately led to disturb those parts in which they have neither interest, connection, nor property, I think much to be apprehended. All the unhappy sufferers that I have seen, have been in various ways deprived of the principal part of their subsistence; and though, from the cheapness of provisions here, they have been able to hold out in tolerable comfort hitherto,

[1] Mr. Buchanan, Sept. 19, 1796.

with the little means they brought with them, these must soon be exhausted . . . and the desire for revenge may follow.' Emissaries, Lord Altamount believes, had already come, from other parts of the kingdom, to incite the refugees, and he strongly suspected some men who were carrying crucifixes and pretending to be prophets. Then follows an extremely significant and important paragraph. 'There is another matter to which I must call your attention, and it is of the most serious importance. You may perhaps receive it with some doubts, because, though I advance it as a *positive fact that I know*,[1] I cannot commit to paper my authority, nor must I be quoted for it myself. An idea has gone abroad, that the persecutions in the North have been fomented by Government, and however diabolical and absurd such a measure would be for any purpose of politics, it has gained belief, and has disaffected a great body of the Catholics of every rank throughout the kingdom.'[2]

A few months after this letter, Denis Browne, the brother of Lord Altamount, sent the Government a list of the fugitives who were on Lord Altamount's estate, and especially in the neighbourhood of Castlebar. He described them as very unwilling to give information, 'from suspicion of the motive of inquiry, natural enough in their aggrieved and distressed situation.' 'You may be assured,' he continued, 'that though the list I send you of names in this part of Mayo amounts to 950, yet that it is short of the numbers about here. . . . It is certainly of the greatest consequence to the well-being of this country, the Government should be informed accurately of the circumstances of a matter so new and alarming as this strange and cruel persecution. . . . Be assured that no circumstance that has happened in

[1] Underlined in the original.
[2] Lord Altamount to Cooke, July 27, 1796.

Ireland for a hundred years past, has gone so decidedly to separate the mind of this country from the Government. . . . The emigration from the North continues; every day families arrive here with the wreck of their properties.'[1]

'I am assured,' wrote Lord Altamount a few days later, 'and I have no reason to doubt the truth of it, that near 4,000 of those unhappy fugitives have sought shelter in the county of Mayo, and a number that I cannot take on me to compute, in other parts of the province of Connaught. All of them that have come within my reach have conducted themselves peaceably, or very generally so, and I have the most positive assurances from the priests, that intimation will be given if any ill intentions should be found among them; . . . but nevertheless I cannot but recommend that every additional precaution should be used, having in consideration the cruel injuries they allege themselves to have received, and the suspicious quarter from whence they have come.'[2]

Another centre of the refugees was the little town, or, as it then was, village, of Ballina, in the county of Mayo, and a magistrate named Cuffe, who lived in the neighbourhood, went over there to inquire into the circumstances. 'About sixty men,' he says, 'as nearly as I could guess, attended, and I must own the account

[1] Denis Browne, Nov. 5, 1796.

[2] Lord Altamount, Nov. 27, 1796. In the *Dublin Evening Post*, Aug. 27, 1796, it is stated that 'a single gentleman (Col. Martin, of the county of Galway) has given asylum to more than 1,000 souls on his own estate, all peaceable, inoffensive, and living by the labour of their hands.' I cannot find any statistics about the exiles in the South. In a letter from the county Kerry, it is said: 'The account given by Mr. Frizell of the four men taken up at Tralee is exactly the truth. They were innocent, ignorant people, whose fears made them leave this country for fear of being destroyed by the Presbyterians. I believe they had not the smallest idea of doing any mischief.' (John Miller (Moneymore), Dec. 17, 1796.)

they gave of themselves and their sufferings was most melancholy, and affected me much. I examined them very particularly, and received from every one of them the fairest and most satisfactory answers. They told me the place from whence they came, the landlords under whom they had lived, and such as had leases stated the nature of their interests, and named the persons to whom they had sold, and the sums they had received. They all produced certificates of their good conduct, and referred me besides to gentlemen of the country from whence they came, for their characters. In short, they have satisfied me most clearly, that they are all of them honest and industrious men. All of them I have yet seen are of the Roman Catholic religion, and almost all from the county of Armagh.' It did not appear to Mr. Cuffe that the fugitives at Ballina were in any degree disloyal, or had taken any seditious oath, and he found them quite ready to take the oath of allegiance, but in the mountainous districts of Mayo there were said to be Northerners of a different description.[1]

A month later, and after a fuller inquiry, he sent the Government a complete list of the refugees at Ballina, with what appears to me to be a very candid and temperate estimate of the causes of their exile. 'These people,' he writes, 'are all of the Roman Catholic religion, and almost all of them weavers. . . . I found them all decent, well-behaved men, and much more intelligent than the natives of the place. . . . Four of them had been plundered, and as many more had been "noticed" (*sic*). The others honestly owned to me that they had not been injured or persecuted, but had left their country of their own free will. As far as I can judge from what they told, the cause of their emigration,

[1] James Cuffe to Pelham, Nov. 25, 1796.

in general, was that the Peep of Day Boys (with whom they, under the name of Defenders, have been in a constant state of warfare for above thirty years) have lately become too powerful for them, and they therefore thought they would be happier in any other county. Many of them owned to me candidly, that they had been in fault in the beginning, and they all agreed that if the gentlemen of their country had been as attentive to the police of it as I was to that of my country, they might have remained at home unmolested. . . . Upon the whole, the result of my inquiry was, that none of them appeared to have fled from justice, very few from persecution, and the bulk of them because their antagonists, the Peep of Day Boys, are become too powerful, and likely to worst them at fairs and other places where they meet them.'[1]

The flight of the Catholics from some districts was sufficiently considerable to affect seriously the agrarian condition. A Catholic historian asserts that, some months after the disturbances broke out, it was found that when a farm was to be let, the number of bidders was so reduced, that not much more than half the former rent could be obtained, and he malevolently ascribes to this fact the strong resolutions of the magistrates under the presidency of Lord Gosford.[2] The insinuation is probably unfounded, but it is, I believe, perfectly true that in these, as in most Irish disturbances, the agrarian element had a considerable part. The Catholics and the Presbyterians in the North, had long confronted each other as two distinct and dissimilar nations, and the low standard of comfort which accompanied the inferior civilisation of the

[1] James Cuffe to Pelham, Dec. 22, 1796.

[2] Hay's *Insurrection of the County Wexford*, p. 39 (edit. 1803). A similar assertion is made in O'Driscoll's *Views of Ireland*, ii. 152, 153.

Catholics, enabling them to offer higher rents than the Protestants, gave them an advantage in the competition for farms. There had been, as I have already noticed, in certain districts, a great displacement of the Protestant by the Catholic element owing to this cause, and although it was not the immediate and direct motive of the disturbances, it no doubt intensified the animosity which difference of religion, difference of race, and great difference of civilisation had already produced.

The reader is now in possession of evidence which, although of a somewhat fragmentary description, is sufficient to enable him to form his own judgment of the Orange disturbances in Ulster. It is plain, I think, that these disturbances, considered as a whole, cannot be regarded as unprovoked. They were a continuation or revival of the war between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders, which had raged fiercely in Ulster for many years before the Orange Society was founded. The Defender movement had long ceased to be a mere league for self-defence. It was distinctly treasonable, for it was intended to assist and provoke a French invasion; it was accompanied by numerous and horrible outrages, and in 1795 it had spread over twelve counties, or more than a third part of Ireland. It is also true that in the battle of the Diamond, which was the immediate cause of the Orange outbreak, the Catholics were the aggressors. It is, I think, no less evident that the Protestant retaliation soon assumed the form and dimensions of a most serious religious persecution; that through violence, or through fear of violence, multitudes of industrious and inoffensive men were compelled to abandon their homes, driven from the trades by which they lived, despoiled of almost all they possessed, and obliged to seek refuge in remote Catholic districts. It is probably no exaggeration to say, that the exiles may be numbered by thousands, and it is im-

possible to resist the conclusion that some of the magistrates shamefully tolerated or connived at the outrages. Nothing of this kind had occurred in Ireland since the days of Cromwell, and the consternation, the panic, the wildly exaggerated rumours it produced, exercised an enormous influence on Irish politics.

In the first place, the fierce revival of religious animosity was a fatal obstacle to that co-operation of Protestants and Catholics for the purposes of revolution, which it was the object of the United Irishmen to produce. The revolutionary movement in its earlier stages existed mainly among the Protestants of the North, and in 1795 nothing would have appeared more improbable than that the rebellion should have been chiefly Catholic, and chiefly confined to Leinster. The course which it ultimately took was largely due to the distrust which the events in the North had sown between Protestants and Catholics, and which was afterwards intensified by the crimes in Wexford. On the other hand, the religious animosities which were thus engendered left an enduring root of bitterness in Irish life, and the disloyalty of the Catholic masses advanced with gigantic strides. Up to the period of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, though there was great positive lawlessness, and almost complete alienation of sympathy from the Government, there appears to have been, in these masses, but little active political disaffection. After that period, a change passed over their spirit; but although the Defenders looked forward to a French invasion, as likely to redress their tithe and agrarian grievances, the political element in their combinations was still a subordinate one. The numerous poor peasants who were dragged from their homes, and sent without trial to serve in the King's fleet, produced a new and fiercer spirit of resentment, which the outrages in Armagh raised to fever heat. The plundered fugitives from the North, as they re-

counted their wrongs among the Catholic peasantry of Connaught and Munster, preached rebellion more powerfully than any other missionaries, and it was soon believed, in the words of a Catholic historian, 'that about five thousand (some say seven thousand) Catholics had been forced or burned out of the county of Armagh, and that the ferocious banditti who had expelled them, had been encouraged, connived at, countenanced, instigated, or protected by the Government.'[1] In this belief, the United Irishmen at last found an effectual means of arousing the Catholics, and it was industriously diffused from one end of Ireland to the other.

Whatever may have been the case with some of the subordinate members of the Government, it is certainly not true that Lord Camden looked upon these outrages with any other feeling than horror and dread, and one of his letters, written in August 1796, shows how clearly he foresaw their effects. The Government had by this time, he hoped, stopped the outrages in Armagh, but not, he says, before 'a multitude of families fled from the country, and were obliged to resort for new settlements to other parts of the kingdom, where they related their sufferings, and, I fear, have excited a spirit of revenge among their Catholic brethren. The Committee of Belfast, which had been long engaged in forming democratic societies and clubs upon the principles of the French Revolution, took advantage of this ill conduct of the Dissenters in Armagh, to form a junction with the societies of Defenders in the western and midland counties, and to revive their committees. . . . I am concerned to add, that their endeavours have been attended with much success. . . . Their conduct is cautious, and they are never guilty of outrage, so that the part of the country whence most danger is

[1] Plowden, ii. 563.

to be apprehended, is apparently most quiet and peaceable.' They boast of their success in seducing the military, and these boasts 'are too well grounded, especially among the militia men, who are Catholics, and whose feelings may have been irritated by the ill behaviour of the Dissenters and Orangemen in Armagh. . . . Emissaries have been among them [the Catholics], to influence them against the Dissenters of Armagh, to instil into their minds that the persecution of the Catholics is protected by Government. . . . The party of Dissenters called Orangemen keep up a system of terror at least, if not of outrage, in Armagh, and have begun to carry their vexation of the Catholics into the county of Down. Some of them were recently apprehended by a spirited magistrate, but on prosecution at the late assizes, the Catholics, on whose examinations they had been taken up, through terror or other causes, prevaricated on trial, and the offenders escaped.' These outrages, though 'not aimed immediately at Government, are perhaps more dangerous than even direct conspiracies, as they justly irritate the Catholics, and give a pretence for the disaffected to act upon.' [1]

The terror inspired by the Orangemen was extreme. As the Armagh depredators had taken that name, their outrages were naturally regarded as the deliberate acts of the society, which was now said to be intended for the extermination of the Catholics, and to have embodied this object in its secret oath. Of this charge no evidence has been adduced. The society in its first conception was essentially defensive, and at a later period, when many respectable country gentlemen joined it, they solemnly declared that no such oath had ever been taken by its members. But the false report had struck too deep a root to be eradicated, and

[1] Camden to Portland, Aug. 6, 1796.

the United Irishmen very skilfully put themselves forward as the champions of the oppressed. Catholic fugitives were sheltered and protected by Presbyterian families in Down and Antrim, and prosecutions were carried on, though with little or no success, by the United Irish Committee in Ulster against the rioters, and even against conniving magistrates.[1] It was sworn that some of these latter had actually refused to take the examinations of aggrieved Catholics, and had themselves threatened them with banishment.[2] 'To the Armagh persecution,' wrote the United Irish leaders, in the memoir which they afterwards drew up in prison, for the Government, 'is the union of Irishmen most exceedingly indebted. The persons and properties of the wretched Catholics of that county, were exposed to the merciless attacks of an Orange faction, which was certainly, in many instances, uncontrolled by the justices of the peace, and claimed to be in all supported by the Government. . . . Wherever the Orange system was introduced, particularly in Catholic counties, it was uniformly observed that the numbers of United Irishmen increased most astonishingly.'[3]

The parliamentary proceedings in the spring and in the winter of 1796 did little to improve the situation. The reports for this year are much more imperfect and fragmentary than those for previous years, but, as far as can be judged, the strength of the Government and the violence of the Opposition had both greatly increased. The short session, which began on January 21, and ended on April 15, 1796, was mainly occupied with the Act of indemnity for such persons as had in the preceding half-year exceeded their legal powers in the preservation of the public peace, and with the Insur-

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 117.
[2] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 168.
[3] McNevin, p. 178.

rection Act, but Grattan also brought forward, as an amendment to the address, a resolution demanding free trade between Great Britain and Ireland, on the basis of equalisation of duties. He was defeated in one division by 122 to 14, and in another division by 82 to 16. In his speech on the address, he adopted the tone of violent opposition, and enumerated, in a bitter retrospect, the chief grievances of several successive years—the sale of peerages under Lord Buckinghamshire; the efforts of conspicuous members of the Westmorland Government in 1792, to excite a spirit of hostility to the Catholics; the violation during several months, by Lord Westmorland, of the law which expressly ordered that an effective force of 12,000 men should be retained in Ireland; the conduct of the same viceroy, in creating fourteen new places tenable by members of Parliament, and in granting no less than thirteen reversions; the fact that some of the most valuable of these reversions were granted after his successor had actually been appointed; and finally, the crowning grievance and perfidy of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam.

The power of the Government was, however, perfectly unbroken, and its chief measures were carried almost without divisions. The Act of indemnity was justified chiefly by English precedents. Such an Act had been carried by the English Parliament in the first year of William III.; after the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, and after the Gordon riots in 1780, and the Irish Act now passed with apparently no further formal opposition than a motion of Grattan, that the judges should first be summoned to give information to the House.[1]

[1] Grattan condensed the arguments against it with great power, in a petition which he drew up for the Whig Club. Musgrave states (p. 145) that the measure was violently opposed by the minority. See, too, Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 204–208.

The Insurrection Act, that accompanied it, is one of the most severe and comprehensive in Irish history, and it was preceded and justified by some resolutions, describing the extremely dangerous and anarchical condition of some parts of the country. The Attorney-General mentioned that in three counties in Connaught, the Defenders in open day had attacked the King's troops, that on one occasion forty or fifty of the Defenders fell, and that the operation of the ordinary law was, in many places, almost paralysed by intimidation, and especially by the frequent murder of witnesses. The Act made it death to administer, transportation for life voluntarily to take, a seditious oath. It compelled the production of all arms for registration, changed in several important respects the criminal procedure, and enabled the Lord Lieutenant and Council, upon a memorial from the magistrates, to proclaim particular districts as in a state of disturbance. In proclaimed districts, the inhabitants were forbidden to be out of their houses from one hour after sunset until sunrise, and justices of the peace were empowered to search all houses during the prohibited hours, to ascertain whether the inmates were abroad, or whether arms were concealed. They might also demand the surrender even of registered arms, and there were stringent clauses against 'tumultuous assemblies' by daytime, against meetings by night in public-houses, against men and women who sold seditious and unstamped papers.[1] All these clauses might be fully justified. The part of the Insurrection Act which appears to me objectionable, and which Sir Lawrence Parsons strongly opposed, is that which enabled the magistrates in the proclaimed districts to do by law what had already been done without law and in defiance of law—to send

[1] 36 Geo. III. c. 20.

men whom they considered disorderly characters, untried, to the fleet. Under this comprehensive category were comprised all who were out of doors in the prohibited hours and who could not give a satisfactory account of their purpose, all who had taken unlawful oaths, all who could not prove that they had lawful means of livelihood. This treatment of disorderly persons was justified, on the ground that a power to send vagabonds to the fleet or army had been granted to English magistrates. The circumstances of the two countries, however, were very different, and it was only too evident how great were the probabilities in Ireland of scandalous oppression and abuse.

It is worthy of notice that Grattan, though he delivered two or three speeches on the Insurrection Bill, does not appear to have objected to any of its enactments except the last, and with this exception he confined himself to censuring its omissions.[1] As the reader has by this time discovered, he had, at no period of his life, any sympathy with those politicians who look with indifference on outrage and crime, or imagine that ordinary remedies are sufficient to meet extraordinary diseases. He contended, however, with much justice, that the Government showed a scandalous partiality, in directing their measures solely against one class of crime, and keeping a complete and shameful silence about the outrages in Armagh—outrages, the magnitude and atrocity of which had been formally attested by the governor of the county, and by the resolutions of the magistrates—outrages which Government had taken no adequate, stringent, or successful measures to suppress. It was a scandalous thing, he said, that they should have justified this Insurrection Bill, by resolutions specifying the attempts to assassinate magistrates;

[1] Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 218-229.

to murder witnesses; to plunder houses; to seize arms by force; and should have kept an absolute silence about attempts to seize the persons of his Majesty's subjects, and to force them to abandon their lands and habitations, though these crimes were not less great or less notorious, and demanded still more emphatically the interposition of the State, since they had hitherto triumphed over the supineness of the magistracy. He desired to insert among the crimes which the Insurrection Bill was specifically designed to punish, that of forcing his Majesty's subjects to abandon their lands and habitations, and he also wished to make it obligatory upon the county to indemnify fully the sufferer for the injury he received, when beaten, or abused, or driven from his land and habitation. Experience, he argued, had only too clearly shown, that in the state of feeling existing in the North, this compensation should not be left optional with the grand juries, and both in Armagh and elsewhere, the houses of the poorest class of the people had been burned without any redress whatever. The Government, however, refused to accept his proposals, and the Bill was carried in the original form.

'I believe it is not possible,' wrote Camden, 'to explain to others the necessity of certain measures, which a residence in this country forces me to feel.' And he gives, as an example, the Insurrection Bill, 'which seems to alarm the finer feelings of British legislators,' though it had passed 'without a division in an Irish House of Commons, and in the presence of an active and, in some respects, of a spirited and intelligent Opposition, whose chief objection to it was, that it did not meet every possible case of aggression.'[1] 'Of your Insurrection Act,' replied Portland, 'I will only say that,

[1] Camden to Portland, March 21.

though the necessity of such a measure is but too well established by the facility of its passage through Parliament, my astonishment at the existence of such a necessity in a country enjoying the same form of government as this, is not abated by the event.'[1]

Pelham, whose health was exceedingly bad, hastened, after the adjournment of Parliament, to England, where, indeed, he appears to have spent more time than any other Secretary since the establishment of the Constitution of 1782. Several letters show the anxiety of the Lord Lieutenant for his return, but his absence is not without some compensation for an Irish historian, who has the great advantage of reading the full and confidential reports that were sent to him from Ireland.[2] They show how fast, in spite of a few condemnations at the Armagh Assizes, the Orange movement in its worst form was extending, and how fatally it was inflaming Catholic disaffection. They amply justify Grattan's complaints of the supineness of the magistracy and the inadequacy of the laws, and they are especially significant, as they come chiefly from Cooke, who was at this time in sympathy with the strong Protestant and anti-reforming spirit of Clare.

On July 12, a new and irritating Orange commemoration was kept, in a procession to the Diamond. It passed off quietly, but 5,000 Orangemen took part in it, parading without arms, but with banners representing King George on one side, and William III. on the other. 'The Orangemen,' added Cooke, 'are beginning

[1] Portland to Camden, March 24. 'I cannot conceive that any man can doubt the necessity of such a measure [as the Insurrection Act], who had read the accounts which have been transmitted from this country of the machinations and designs of the United Irishmen, the Catholic Committee, the Defenders, Peep of Day Boys, and other disturbers of the public peace.' (Pelham to Portland, March 31, 1796.)

[2] These letters are in the *Pelham MSS.* in the British Museum.

persecution in the county of Down, and the magistrates are not sufficiently active. The effect of this persecution works on the Catholics in other places, and they naturally breathe revenge. The United Irishmen are very active in enlisting and embracing the Catholics. . . . I have just seen Mr. Brownlow. He says, when the Orange boys were passing, a party of the Queen's County Militia broke away from their officers, and began taking out the Orange cockades. An Orangeman struck one of the soldiers. The soldier bayoneted him. . . . I fear the militia will be tainted from this religious quarrel, and the United Irishmen, in order to seduce the militia and Catholics, promise to join them both against the Orange boys. . . . Nothing can be done till the heads of the United Irishmen can be taken up.' 'The United Irishmen are very active, and uniting with the Defenders daily.' 'The irritating conduct of the Orangemen, in keeping up persecution against the Catholics, does infinite mischief. It has been made the handle for seducing many of the militia, and by information I have just received, I fear apprehensions respecting the militia are too true. Two fellows I employ, and who never deceive me, assure me that there are 700 militia in the garrison, Defenders, and that several of the officers are infected.' 'I own, I see nothing for the safety of this kingdom but an addition of English troops, particularly cavalry, an arming of the gentry, some scheme for reforming the militia, and an effective staff, and I think a bold measure should be struck against the persons and papers of the chief United Irishmen and Defenders.'[1] 'In consequence of the shameful supineness of the magistrates,' wrote another important official from the Castle, 'the Orange boys are still permitted to continue their depredations in the North, with impunity. If this

[1] Cooke to Pelham, July 14, 19, 27.

system of spoliation is much longer acquiesced in by the magistrates, the sufferers must be driven to despair, and, considering themselves put out of the protection of the law, they will necessarily associate for their own defence, and will become recruits to the Jacobin Club established at Belfast. It is absolutely necessary that some very vigorous measures should be adopted for the redress of this crying grievance.'[1]

'We are aware, on our part,' wrote Camden himself, 'that the Orangemen in the North, and the Defenders, are only kept down by the force which is stationed there; it is impossible to have much confidence in some of the militia regiments, . . . not much dependence is to be placed upon our generals.'[2]

Crimes, that were manifestly connected with the United Irish and the Defender movements, were multiplying, and especially murders of informers. Cooke sent to Pelham two long lists of the most recent. Two or three men who had given evidence, had saved their lives by flying from the country, but their relations at home were sometimes pursued. The house of the wife of one of them was nearly destroyed; his brother was obliged to fly from the country; his brother-in-law was fired at. A militia soldier, who was supposed to be an informer, was made drunk in Belfast, flung over the bridge and drowned. A sergeant of the Invalids was waylaid, and shot through the body. A magistrate named Johnson was shot through the body at Lisburn; two men were shot at Newtown Ards, and another in the streets of Belfast. Many persons had been wounded because they had enlisted as yeomen, and one so badly that his life was despaired of. A witness who had been sheltered in the house of Lord Carhampton himself, was imprudent enough to take a short walk with his uncle on Sunday,

[1] William Elliot to Pelham, Aug. 4.

[2] Camden to Pelham, July 30, 1796.

about midday. They were both murdered in the middle of a field. Two or three other cases had occurred. 'A Derry jury,' adds Cooke in terminating the dismal catalogue, 'acquitted a man clearly proved guilty of administering oaths. The other Crown prosecutions in Derry are put off.'[1]

There were at the same time constant intimations that a French invasion, to be followed by an Irish rebellion, was very near. At the end of May, McNally informed the Government that he had received clear hints that an invasion was meditating,[2] and Cooke wrote two months later: 'All my information coincides in the unceasing activity of the disaffected, and their projects for joining the United Irishmen and Defenders, and of insurrection after harvest, aided by rebellion.'[3] Wickham, the English Minister in Switzerland, wrote two letters in July apprising his Government that a formidable French expedition was preparing, and warning them that Ireland was likely to be one of the objects of attack.[4] In September, however, James Tandy received letters, written from America by Rowan and Reynolds, which stated that 'the French resident at Philadelphia had informed his confidential friends of the Irish party there, that France will not attempt an invasion of Ireland till after a peace with Germany. This being accomplished, it will be their first, as it is their favourite, object.'[5]

The letters of McNally at this time dwell strongly on the rapid spread of disaffection among the Catholics. The original agitators, he said, in the Catholic Committee and Convention, had never aimed, like the Defenders, at 'plunder and massacre.' But many of

[1] Cooke to Pelham, July 27, Aug. 10, 1796.
[2] Ibid. May 31, 1796.
[3] Ibid. July 27, 1796.
[4] Wickham's *Correspondence*, i. 405, 406, 436, 437.
[5] J. W., Sept. 16, 1796.

them, through the rejection of their claims, were now ready to risk the consequences of invasion, and all of them had made 'total separation from Great Britain' their grand object. Of this fact, from an intimate personal acquaintance with them, he was fully convinced. Their immediate aim was to cement the union between Presbyterians and Catholics. Grattan and the parliamentary minority had almost wholly lost their influence. At a recent interview with the parliamentary leaders, 'the Catholics declared, that though there was a time when they looked no further than a reform in Parliament, and a full emancipation of the Catholic body, yet now their interests were general and not confined to themselves; the question to be determined was no longer a Catholic question, but a national question—the freedom of Ireland. They had, in consequence of former disappointments and ill treatment, united with the friends of liberty in the North, with whom they would stand or fall.' They spoke of the abolition of tithes, and the confiscation of the property of absentees; but their language, their hopes, and their policy, all pointed to separation.[1]

The organisation, McNally said, was spreading with portentous rapidity. Most of the lower priests, and village schoolmasters, were active agents. Numerous missionaries, supported by subscriptions from their several societies, had gone forth to organise the other provinces. It was reported that 15,000 men had already taken the test in Munster, and several agents had been sent to Connaught to organise the Catholic refugees. Arms were being everywhere collected, and it was believed that not less than 40,000 well-armed men could be counted on in the North. It was determined to wait for the arrival of the French, and it was believed that an invasion would greatly accelerate the revolution; but

[1] J. W., July 24, Sept. 3, 26, Oct. 1, 1796.

the conviction was fast spreading that a general insurrection, even unassisted by the French, must prove successful.[1]

Parliament sat again for a few weeks in the October and November of 1796, and its principal measure was a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, which was carried through with extraordinary rapidity, and was justified by the danger of permitting treason to spread, when the dangers of invasion were imminent. Grattan was one of the minority of seven who opposed the measure, and his speeches at this time appear to me to have been the most violent he ever delivered. It is evident from them that he considered the country hastening to a catastrophe, and that he felt wholly impotent to avert it. In sentences of condensed power, worthy of Tacitus, he described the triumphs of the French, the military inefficiency of the ministry, the urgent necessity for peace, the continuous and systematic corruption by which the Irish Parliament was governed, the folly and the perfidy with which the Catholics had been at one time encouraged and at another repelled; and he insisted, in spite of the manifest hopelessness of the attempt, on again introducing the question of Catholic emancipation. The Chief Secretary, he reminded the House, had very recently said that 'the exclusion of Catholics from Parliament and the State, was necessary for the Crown and the connection, . . . that he was ready to support it with life and fortune.' 'What dictation,' asked Grattan, 'could France have suggested more opportune in time, and more pregnant in disaffection,' than such language? 'Eternal and indefeasible proscription denounced by a minister of the Crown, speaking to three-fourths of his Majesty's subjects in Ireland'! 'The Catholic question was made

[1] J. W., July 24, Sept. 26, Oct. 5, 1796.

by Government a matter between the people of Ireland and the Crown of England.' 'An English gentleman, on the part of the British Cabinet, comes to this country, to tell us that it is necessary for his country that we should exclude ours, or a principal part of ours.' And this language was used at a time when every effort was being made to seduce the Catholics from their allegiance; at a time when the Government was calling on all denominations of men to make extraordinary exertions for the purpose of securing the Crown and the Constitution; at a time when England was in the closest alliance with the chief Catholic Powers of the Continent, including the Pope himself. Grattan expressed his deep conviction that, in the present awful crisis, nothing could save Ireland and the Empire from ruin except the unanimity of its people, and that the Government was fast making that unanimity impossible. 'The minister who separates the Roman Catholics from the Constitution, separates them from the Empire.' 'If they are forced from under the hospitable roof of the Constitution, . . . they will at length repose under the shade of the dreadful tree of liberty.'

The notion that Popery, as such, was any longer a danger, he treats with contempt. He who maintains such a position, 'totally mistakes the principles of human action at this day. Controverted points of religion are a principle of human action no longer, and least of all the points which are renounced in the disqualifying oath—the worship of the Virgin Mary and the belief in the Real Presence.' But if religious controversies have ceased to be operative in politics, they have been abundantly replaced. 'A new spirit of reformation has gone forth, and the objects of its wrath are the abuses of the European Governments, abuses in their Churches, and abuses in their States. . . . In other countries it is the despotism, in these the corrup-

tion, of monarchical government that is complained of.' Such a spirit, he said, could only be met by an energetic reformation of abuses. In Ireland it was met 'by selling the peerage, creating nameless offices to purchase the Parliament, influencing the corporations, intimidating popular meetings, and making all the constitutional authorities as corrupt as possible, and afterwards by making them proscriptive.'

On the subject of the outrages in the county of Armagh, Grattan dwelt with extreme bitterness, and accused the Government of gross supineness and gross partiality. 'Government had not exerted all the powers which the law gave it. Had Government dismissed any of the magistrates? . . . Will Government say that in a year and a half, with 40,000 soldiers and with summary laws that would have enabled them to pull down the liberties of the whole island, they could not reduce that county to order? I cannot but think, the audacity of the mob arose from a confidence in the connivance of Government. Under an Administration sent here to defeat a Catholic Bill, a Protestant mob very naturally conceives itself a part of the State.' Some magistrates, he said, had retired from the scene; others had secretly fomented or openly encouraged the outrages, and when the Government in their recent resolutions classed and recited the different kinds of outrage in the country, they took no notice of those which were perpetrated by the Orangemen, and they defeated a clause for compensating the sufferers.

Such language contained unfortunately much truth, but it was not calculated to pacify the public mind. The resolution in favour of Catholic emancipation, was evidently thought ill timed. George Ponsonby indeed observed that, of all who opposed it, 'only two opposed it on its merits—the rest acknowledged the propriety of the measure, and objected only to the time of bring-

ing it forward.' But on the latter ground, the feeling seems to have been very general. Sir Hercules Langrishe, the oldest, and one of the steadiest, of the friends of the Catholics, spoke in favour of the Government, and tried to calm the troubled waters. 'In the course of the last twenty years,' he said, 'the magnanimity of Parliament has made great concessions to our Catholic brethren; no less than an entirely equal condition of property, and *almost* entirely an equal measure of privilege, and as to the great body of the people, total equality. What little of concession still remains behind (which is little more than pride and punctilio), must be the work of conciliation and not contention, and will not be achieved by carrying on a war of passions and of party. . . . Leave a good cause, for some time, to the operation of reason and retiring passion, and do not by premature efforts unite your opponents by new bonds of confederacy, by the pride of consistency, or the obligation of engagements repeatedly interchanged. . . . Postpone a question of disputation and division, and proceed to the Bill before you, for the defence of the country.' The advice was taken, and Grattan's resolution was defeated by 143 to 19. This was the last occasion on which Catholic emancipation was proposed as a separate measure in the Parliament of Ireland.[1]

In addition to the Indemnity Act, the Insurrection Act, and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, a few measures were carried in 1796, which deserve a brief notice. There was an Act which, in my opinion, ought never to have been altered, making conspiracy to murder, a felony of the same nature as murder itself. It might indeed be reasonably contended that this

[1] It formed part, however, of Ponsonby's scheme of parliamentary reform in the following year.

offence, whether measured by its effects upon society, or by the moral guilt it implies, is the more heinous of the two, and in a country like Ireland, where a very large proportion of the worst crimes are prepared in secret societies and committed by deputy, it is especially dangerous. A new Act was passed, preventing the importation, and regulating the sale, of arms and ammunition; the salaries of the judges were again raised; the punishment of hanging was substituted in Ireland, as it had a few years before been in England, in the execution of women, for the much more horrible punishment of burning; and the greater part of the Dublin Police Act, which was still exceedingly unpopular, was repealed, thus restoring to the Corporation the chief control over the maintenance of order.[1]

Whatever may be thought of the coercive legislation of 1796, no one who reads the correspondence of the time can doubt, that remedies of a most exceptional and drastic character were imperatively needed. At the same time, during the whole of this year, the disease appears to have been mainly, though certainly not exclusively, in the North. In August, when a project of raising a yeomanry force was entertained, Toler, the Solicitor-General, wrote: 'I think I can venture to say, from what I know of the South and West of Ireland, that Government may, with safety and effect, appeal to the gentry and farmers in those parts to act under commissions from the Crown, prudently issued. . . . It is evident to demonstration, that the opinion of the multitude, and of all descriptions in the provinces of Munster, Leinster, and Connaught, has grown infinitely more loyal during the war, which evidently saved Ireland, by the exclusion of Jacobins, and by bringing the idle and dangerous under the control of military

[1] 36 Geo. III. c. 26, 27, 30, 31, 42.

discipline.'[1] But the state of the North was extremely alarming, and insurrection was constantly expected. Frequent efforts were made to tamper with the loyalty of the soldiers and the militia; several militiamen were found to have taken the United Irishman's oath, and the dispute between Protestant and Catholic, which originated at Armagh, soon extended to the forces, and showed itself in a violent quarrel between the Mayo and Kilkenny Militia, on the one hand, and the Tyrone Militia on the other.[2]

In August, Camden[3] described the state of the country as growing rapidly worse. Trees of liberty had been planted in Antrim, and bonfires lit in consequence of French victories. Officers of the County Limerick Militia declared that they could place very little dependence on their men. There were great fears about the Queen's County and the West Meath Militia, which were both Catholic, and two men of the latter regiment had been punished for attempting to plant a tree of liberty in the camp. Many of the artillery soldiers quartered at Belfast, were believed to be infected, and four informers had been recently murdered. 'Since Derry Assizes,' wrote a magistrate from Tyrone, 'where all the United Irishmen were tried and acquitted, everyone that will not instantly join that set, is threatened with destruction. . . . God knows how and when this will terminate; no man will pay one penny of debt, so sure are they of an immediate rising.'[4]

'The Protestants about me bordering on the county of Antrim,' wrote another magistrate, from Dromore, 'are in a most horrid panic about those United people rising. They absolutely dare hardly go to bed at night, and never without a watch. . . . They tell me plainly,

[1] Aug. 10, 1796. (I.S.P.O.)
[2] E. Boyle to Cooke, June 21.
[3] Camden to Portland, Aug. 24, 1796.
[4] Andrew Newton, August 15.

that they expect every night to be murdered.'[1] Lord Castlereagh, after a journey through Ulster, wrote that it was impossible to doubt the seriousness of the conspiracy in the northern counties. 'Belfast is its centre, it is very general towards Lisburn, the county of Antrim has been largely infected, and the county of Down is by no means exempt. There is sufficient information to ascertain that the societies gain ground rapidly, and that they have formed very sanguine and extensive hopes in consequence of the fatal turn affairs have taken on the Continent. . . . The same infernal system which prevailed in this neighbourhood, of murdering witnesses, is pursued there, with the additional address, which I fear will distinguish any attempt against the peace of the country which the people of the North may undertake.'[2] Poor men working in the fields in the dusk of the evening, were accosted by armed parties, and compelled, on pain of death, to swear that they would assist the French. Tithes were refused. Tithe receivers, or valuers, were attacked, and threatening notices sent to clergymen who claimed their due. Large subscriptions were raised for prisoners; jurors were carefully marked, and many were challenged in the box because they did not understand certain secret signs.[3]

Several different classes were concerned in the disturbances—a lawless rabble, to whom scenes of confusion and plunder had the same attraction as carrion to the vulture; half-maddened Catholics, infuriated by the proceedings in Armagh, and burning for revenge; adventurers, looking only for excitement or for gain; fanatics, who would be content with nothing short of a purely democratic government; half-educated and unsettled

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[1] Captain Waddell, Aug. 29, 1796.

[2] Castlereagh to Pelham, Aug. 23. (I.S.P.O.)

[3] H. Alexander, Aug. 1, 1796.

men of all descriptions, who in Ireland so commonly play with treason, though they are seldom prepared to make any real sacrifice for it. It was noticed by an excellent observer, that the ranks of the United Irishmen were largely recruited by men of desperate fortunes, whose small estates were mortgaged beyond their value, and who hoped in a general convulsion to extricate themselves from their debts.[1] With these were mingled some honest and even moderate men, who had been reluctantly driven into rebellion by the conviction, that in no other way could even the most constitutional reform be obtained; and also, as a Derry magistrate remarked, a few able and industrious men, usually of good characters, who had made fortunes of from 1,000*l.* to 6,000*l.*, and who resented the social superiority of the landed gentry. Such men were sedulously cultivated by the United Irishmen, but a little attention from the Government might easily conciliate them. The jobs of grand juries about roads, the Church collections imposed upon sturdy Presbyterians, and the manifold oppressions of the agents of great absentee proprietors, all contributed to swell the ranks of the disaffected.[2]

Carrickfergus was one of the great centres of disturbance.[3] An active and loyal soldier was fired at and wounded; another loyalist was shot dead in the streets, and it was stated that a regular assassination club had been formed. By the assistance of a very energetic Protestant loyalist named McNevin, the Government obtained the services of a Catholic priest named McCarry, in that town. 'Notwithstanding his priestcraft,' wrote McNevin, 'he would go to hell for money.' 'He knows

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[1] F. H. [Higgins], Jan. 30, 1798.

[2] H. Alexander, Aug. 1, 1796. Emmet stated before the Committee of the House of Lords in 1798, that a great many large middleman tenants had joined the United Irishmen. (McNevin, p. 234.)

[3] See several letters from Carrickfergus, July 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

all the principals except a few great men, who are kept a secret from all but one or two.' 'I am sure he will give such real and useful information as must effectually serve Government; he being at the head of every infamous and rebellious transaction here, and a man of great mischief.' Cooke had an interview with him, and described him to Pelham as 'a cunning, bigoted, low Papist,' who was not himself a United Irishman or personally acquainted with the leaders, but who knew well what was going on in the conspiracy, and who, being an artful, inflammatory preacher, had great influence upon the lower Catholics. He became an assiduous correspondent of the Government, and extorted many small sums from them, but it is doubtful whether he ever really wished to serve them, and his letters give the impression of an illiterate, cunning, rapacious man who was deserving of very little credit. The United Irishmen, he reported, believed that the French were about to land 20,000 men in Cushendall Bay, and 20,000 in the West, on condition of obtaining the revenue of Ireland for five years. There was a plot for seizing Dublin Castle, and the castles of Carrickfergus, Down, Athlone, and Limerick. Antrim, Down, and Derry were ripe for revolt. 'Here,' he said, 'we are not certain to live for an hour. Murders are daily committed.' He appears to have pointed out a house in which bullets were cast, and he promised to reveal where cannon were concealed; to procure information against the leading conspirators, and to use his own influence as a preacher to turn the Catholics in favour of the Government. Whether he fulfilled any of these promises, is very doubtful.[1]

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[1] McCarry, July 23, Oct. 24; A. McNevin, Oct. 25, 1796 (I.S.P.O.); Cooke to Pelham, July 19, 1796. Another ecclesiastic, who is spoken of as 'Friar Philips,' appears to have given

A much more useful and important correspondent of the Castle, was Francis Higgins, a man who is still vividly remembered in Ireland under the title of the Sham Squire. He obtained this nickname from a discreditable episode of his early life, when he formed a rich marriage by pretending to be a possessor of landed property, and heir to a wealthy lawyer. He was a man of great energy, and of much coarse talent, and had been for some years the proprietor of the 'Freeman's Journal,' which was one of the principal newspapers in Ireland, and which under his influence passed completely into the ranks of the Government. For this service, he had obtained a small annual subsidy some time before the Administration of the Duke of Portland, and it was subsequently increased. He was also an attorney and a magistrate; he held two or three small offices from Government, and he took an active part in municipal affairs. Possessing to an eminent degree the peculiar talent of a newspaper editor for forming and maintaining useful connections in many quarters, and hunting out obscure information, his knowledge of Dublin life made him very useful to the Government, and his influence was increased by the fact, that he was owner of some houses inhabited by manufacturers in the Earl of Meath's Liberty in Dublin, and had acquired popularity by acts of kindness to Dublin workmen. His timely warning of an intended attack upon Lord Camden on his first entry into Dublin, has been already mentioned; and at a later period, as we shall see, he was able to render a service to the Government, of transcendent importance.

He appears to have been a warm and steady friend, and liberal in his charities, but his general reputation

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the Government some really valuable assistance in detecting Defender leaders. (Cooke to Pelham, Dec. 4, 1795. *Pelham MSS.*)

was not good; he had many enemies, and he was furiously lampooned in prose and verse. His low birth; his imprisonment for fraud when a young man; his alleged connection with a gambling house; his almost deformed person; his coarse, pushing, ostentatious manners, were abundantly commemorated; but, in spite of all opposition, he rose to wealth, and being a man of much humour and of very convivial tastes, he easily gathered men of all parties to his great house in Stephen's Green. In Ireland, even more than in most countries, when the bottle flows freely, information is easily obtained. In enumerating his services to the Government, Higgins especially mentions the expense he had incurred in entertaining priests and other persons of the higher class, for the purpose of obtaining intelligence,[1] and he also adds that he retained and paid weekly from his own means as many as seven persons, 'belonging to and among the different United societies, clubs, &c.' His informants were men who could never have been induced to appear in the witness box, but they enabled him to supply the Government with regular accounts of the proceedings of some of the societies in Dublin, and with a great deal of most im-

[1] There is a series of anonymous reports about the United Irishmen, from an informer in 1796, in the London Record Office. In one of them the informer makes an amusingly candid confession: 'There is one thing wherein they puzzle me, which is, that they seldom say much till they are nearly drunk, and by the time I get them in that plight I am little better myself, and though they were to open their hearts ever so liberally, I stand a fair chance of forgetting it by morning.' McNally, in his requests for money, frequently dwells on the importance of being able to entertain the conspirators. 'Without money,' he says, in one of his letters, 'it is impossible to do what is expected. Those Spartans wish to live like Athenians in matters of eating and drinking. They live so among each other, and without ability to entertain, I cannot live with them, and without living with them I cannot learn from them.'

portant information about the aims and conduct of the leaders of the conspiracy. Nearly a hundred and forty letters from his pen are preserved in the Government records, and they furnish valuable materials for the history of the time. Though himself a convert to Protestantism, he had much communication with priests, and singularly full and accurate information about Catholic affairs, and he was on terms of warm friendship with Arthur O'Leary. Among his other intimate friends were, the Chief Justice Lord Clonmell, Lord Carhampton, and John Beresford; and it was mentioned as a proof of the fastidious haughtiness of Lord Clare, that he would never be present at his dinners. Higgins employed many informers, but he was not himself in the ordinary sense of the word an informer, for he professed in the strongest terms his devotion to the Government, his newspaper was a Government organ, and he was accustomed to go openly and frequently to the Castle.[1]

He informed the Government that the recent French victories had greatly raised the spirits of the seditious;

[1] See, on Higgins, Madden's *United Irishmen*, and especially Mr. Fitzpatrick's interesting little volumes, *The Sham Squire*, and *Ireland before the Union*. These writers seem to me, however, to exaggerate not a little the turpitude of Higgins, and to attach a great deal too much importance to 'traditional anecdotes' of a very worthless and malevolent gossip. His warning on the occasion of Camden's entry into Dublin, has escaped the notice of his biographers, and rests on his own statement; but as he continually, in his letters to the Castle, puts forward this service as his chief claim for favour, and as it never appears to have been disputed, it is no doubt true. He bequeathed a great portion of his property to charities, Catholic as well as Protestant, and O'Leary was one of those to whom he left a legacy. He himself enumerates his services in letters of March 2, June 18, 30, 1798, Dec. 2, 21, 1799, March 18, Nov. 18, 1801. There is also, in the I.S.P.O., an unsigned and undated memorandum about the services and rewards of Higgins and some other persons connected with the Press.

and accounts of them, copied from an English ministerial paper, were circulated widely through the country. Several small seditious clubs, which he pointed out, met in different parts of the city, and there were no fewer than four servants' clubs in Dublin, which might become very dangerous from the peculiar facilities for information possessed by their members. Immediate invasion was expected, and the Catholics, he believed, would be at best neutral. One of them had said in his hearing, that probably the devastations of the French would not be worse than those of the tithe proctor—and some honest men might obtain their own again. At the meetings of the Catholic committees, strong hopes were expressed that there might be at least a change of ministry. It might do the Catholics good, and no Government could be worse than that in which Lord Clare was a leading member. Grattan had promised constantly to urge the Catholic claims. A proposal to petition the King, was abandoned in consequence of the earnest opposition of Keogh. The new yeomanry force was believed to be intended to override the Catholic influence and claims, and the committee determined, by all the agencies at their disposal, to dissuade the Catholics from enlisting in it. Higgins complained that, in spite of a very good harvest, the poor in Dublin were much oppressed by the dearness of bread, which he attributed to the combination of the corn merchants, and he predicted that this would one day produce disorder. The Government had not, he thought, been very judicious in their selection of an agent for acting on the Catholics. 'The Roman Catholic body hold a superficial opinion of Dr. Hussey as a courtly priest. If anything was to be effected or wished to be done in the Roman Catholic body, Dr. O'Leary would do more with them in one hour, than Hussey in seven years. Of this, I am perfectly assured—and O'Leary not ten days since

wrote me word, he would shortly claim a bed at my house.'[1]

'The suspicions,' wrote Lord Camden, 'which the gentry entertain of the militia, even were an invasion not to take place, have induced great numbers to wish to associate for the preservation of their properties and to form corps of yeomanry cavalry and infantry, for their own, and for the protection of the country, all under commissions from the Crown. I believe your grace will agree with me, that it is hardly possible to refuse an assent to propositions of this nature.'[2] This was the very plan which Lord Fitzwilliam had proposed, and which the English Government had rejected; but Camden, though he had at first been hostile to it, now recognised its necessity. That there were difficulties and dangers attending it, he clearly saw. It would be very necessary, and at the same time very invidious, to reject the services of many who would gladly obtain arms from the Government. It was possible that the militia might be affronted. It was certain that a project for arming the property of the country might be construed into a project for arming the Protestants against the Catholics. But 'when there is reason to apprehend an attack from the enemy, when a very considerable district is organised in disaffection, as is the case at Belfast and in its vicinity, when there is a *general* disaffection amongst the lower orders, both of Catholics and Dissenters, to English Government,' such a measure was absolutely necessary. The Speaker still doubted its expediency, but the Chancellor, the Attorney-General, and Lord Carhampton, all favoured it.[3]

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[1] F. Higgins, Aug. 1, 15, Sept. 27, 30, Oct. 11, 16, 24, 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

[2] Camden to Portland, Aug. 24, 1796.

[3] Ibid. Sept. 3, 1796. See, too, Cooke to Pelham, May 31; Camden to Pelham, July 30, Aug. 6, 1796.

In the autumn and winter of 1796, great progress was made in enrolling the new force. Charlemont and Conolly, who had much influence in the North, warmly supported it, and a large number of country gentlemen volunteered their services. Considering the strongly anti-Catholic policy of the Government, which presided over the movement, and considering also that the yeomanry were intended chiefly as a protection against the Catholic Defenders, and against the United Irishmen who placed Catholic emancipation in the forefront of their programme, it was inevitable that, in the North at least, it should consist to a large extent of the most violent Protestants—of men who, by faction fights, or by Defender outrages or menaces, had been inflamed to the highest point of animosity against their Catholic fellow-countrymen. It was equally certain, that a force raised so hastily, under such circumstances, and from such materials, would, in time of trial, prove very undisciplined and prone to unnecessary violence. Lord Downshire, who was actively employed near Newry in enrolling yeomanry cavalry, wrote, 'I am happy to say, that there are some very respectable and loyal Papists among them;' but he added, 'the yeomanry infantry are not so liberal as the cavalry; their condition of service is, that no Papist should be enrolled with them. . . . They are chiefly Orangemen, and all agree in not admitting a Papist, however recommended.'[1] All who were in known sympathy with the United Irishmen and their policy, were of course excluded, and this shut out the great body of those who composed the volunteers of 1782. The Catholic Committee strongly discouraged their co-religionists from enlisting, and the United Irishmen exerted all their influence to paralyse the movement. A powerful address, signed 'Common Sense,' urging the

[1] Nov. 25, 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

folly of division between Catholics and Protestants, was at this time circulated widely through Ulster. 'Look to America,' said the writer, 'where every persuasion pays its own clergy, and all are in harmony. Let distinctions be forgot, unite with each other, and remember that you have a common interest not to pay useless and oppressive taxes to bribe the men that oppress you all, or tithes to pastors who never instruct you. Try the blessings that will follow union, and trust me, you will in one single session, and that, if you please, the very next, put an end to corrupt taxes, and to tithes under which the Presbyterian and Catholic equally groan.'[1]

The yeomanry movement appears to have been principally in the North, and to have been directed principally against internal enemies, and, as Camden had feared, it was looked upon, or at least represented, as giving a Government organisation and sanction to the Orange movement in the province. In the other provinces, there was as yet much less disturbance and much less enlisting. When, however, at the end of the year, a French descent in the South seemed imminent, a considerable yeomanry force was speedily created in that part of Ireland, and the Catholics showed themselves quite ready to be enrolled in it. Lord Camden at this time wrote to the English Government, that 'offers of more than 20,000 yeomanry corps had been made and accepted, and that on December 7, 9,000 of them were actually armed;'[2] and Lord Clare himself has borne an emphatic testimony to the loyalty then shown by the Catholic peasantry in the southern and midland districts. 'During all the disturbances,' he says, 'which prevailed in other parts of the kingdom, we were in a state of profound tranquillity and contentment there. . . . When

[1] S. Close to Toler, Oct. 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

[2] Camden to Portland, Dec. 26, 1796.

the enemy appeared on the coast . . . a general sentiment of loyalty prevailed in all ranks and degrees of the people, who vied with each other in contributing to defend their country against the invaders.'[1]

The letters describing the state of Ulster form a striking contrast to this picture. A new feature, which now came into prominence, was a system of great gatherings of the disaffected, under the pretext of digging potatoes or performing other agricultural operations. A letter from Sir George Hill, an active magistrate in the county of Derry, gives a graphic account of one of these meetings, which he witnessed. The ostensible object was to dig the potatoes of a prisoner, but there were not less than 6,000 men assembled. They were clean, well-appointed men, from many quarters, acting systematically together. They carried their spades like muskets, and marched with an erect and defiant mien ; but when ordered by the soldiers to disperse, they at once obeyed, saying with an affected humility, that it was hard to be impeded in their charitable purpose 'of digging a forlorn woman's potatoes,' and asking if they were allowed to dig their own. No other provocation was given. No seditious language or imprecation was used. About 1,500 men had crossed the mountains during the night, to be present at the meeting. 'What alarmed me most completely,' wrote the magistrate, 'was to perceive the calmness observed by the people assembled in such multitudes, from such various quarters, and yet acting with one common system, most evidently by previous arrangement, and under the control of an invisible guidance.' Sir George asked some of them, if they would resist the French in case of an invasion. They answered, in a tone that it was impossible either to resent or misunderstand: 'Our arms have been taken

[1] Speech in the debate of Feb. 19, 1798.

away; the volunteers have been put down; we must not talk politics; we pay dearly for the militia; Government has taken everything into its own hand: if the French come, we cannot resist; we are good Christians, resigned to our fate.' The soldiers were out from one in the morning till three in the afternoon; but as soon as they retired, one or two hundred of the neighbours dug the potato field. 'The system of rebellion,' continued the magistrate, 'is planned deeply, and all that is wanting to give it opportunity of breaking forth, is the landing of a few Frenchmen. . . . I do believe that more than two-thirds of the country has been sworn.' The main object of the potato digging is probably to enable the leaders to ascertain how their men will act at the word of command.[1]

It is easy to conceive the disquiet which such an incident must have produced, and letters from most parts of Ulster confirmed the impression of imminent danger. From Coleraine a magistrate wrote: 'People assemble in bands of hundreds, and sometimes even thousands, for the ostensible purpose of cutting corn and digging potatoes, but, in my opinion, for the real purpose of settling their plans and accustoming themselves to rise in great bodies at the shortest notice.'[2] 'From what I can collect,' wrote a magistrate from the county of Armagh, 'there is as much a system of terror on foot in this neighbourhood, as ever was in France. No neighbour dare tell his opinion to another, hardly to his wife. There has not been a person here that has not received the most threatening letters—even to the lowest cottager—to force them to unite. . . . No man will dare to be out at night, but those that are for bad

[1] Sir G. Hill to Cooke, Nov. 15, 1796. This letter was sent to England, and is in the Record Office. The other magistrates' letters are in the I.S.P.O.

[2] Alexander McNaughten, Oct. 20, 1796.

purposes.' The better class of farmers detested the movement, but they were so terrified, that they had nearly all taken at least the oath of secrecy, after which, if they were known to be resolute and loyal men, they were usually left in peace. A new method had been devised to evade the law against administering unlawful oaths. A man is applied to, and, if he consents to be sworn, he attends a meeting, where he finds a number of men seated round a table drinking, in perfect silence. One of them points to a Bible, and the stranger, acting on instructions he has before received, takes it himself, and swears not to disclose anything that he sees or hears. The silence is then broken, and the others begin to talk, and produce the constitution of the society. If the new comer is prepared to obey, he says so, pointing to the Bible which lies on the table. If not, he has only to keep the oath of secrecy.[1]

All the guns in the neighbourhood, writes a magistrate from Croagh, in the county of Antrim, have been seized by the United Irishmen. Ash trees are everywhere cut down to make pike handles. The magistrates are so unprotected, that they dare not act. There are very few soldiers in the neighbourhood. Many of the militia cannot be depended on, and the post office is no longer safe, on account of the disloyalty of the postmasters.[2] Lord Castlestewart, writing from his house, in the county of Tyrone, reported that numbers of men were accustomed to meet in his district by night, and that smiths were employed in making pike heads. 'They all declare,' he says, 'that though a Frenchman should not land in the kingdom, they will shortly rise in a mass and attempt to execute their designs, that for this purpose they are swearing their different bodies to

[1] N. Alexander (of Boragh), Nov. 15, 1796.

[2] Andrew Newton, Nov. 25, 1796.

be ready at an hour's warning to go wherever they are ordered. . . . The impression of terror is so great all over the country, that no one dares give the least degree of information.' A number of ash trees on his own domain had been cut down, probably to form pike handles, and bodies of men were traversing the country in all directions on horseback, plundering arms.[1] About Derry, reported Conolly, the people are as wicked and rebellious as in any part of the North. It was impossible to get them to take the oath of allegiance. A man's ears had been cut off near Garvagh; corn stacks had been stripped, houses attacked, men knocked down and robbed on the highways.[2]

Communications of this kind were pouring incessantly into the Castle, during the last few weeks of 1796. 'Systematic plans of assassination seem to have been established to stop the channels of justice.'[3] 'The poor people now dare not put their webs into their looms, lest they should have them cut to pieces. . . . There is not a night, almost, passes without racking [wrecking], robbery, burning of houses, sometimes murder, and often very near it.'[4] 'Assassinations are still getting more frequent in this country—a man was shot the day before yesterday, on suspicion of being an informer.'[5] 'Almost the whole country, for many miles round, is disarmed. The disaffected have robbed every one of their guns.'[6] The newly enrolled yeomanry were attacked in the county of Tyrone by a large mob, and several wounded, and 'this disinclination to yeomanry corps manifested by liberty men is not confined

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[1] Lord Castlestewart, Stewart Hall, undated, but apparently November 1796.

[2] Thos. Conolly, Nov. 19, 1796.

[3] George Macartney, Antrim, Nov. 12.

[4] R. Waddell, Islanderry, Nov. 8.

[5] Lord Downshire, Hillsborough, Nov. 2.

[6] Alex. Newton, Croagh, Dec. 2.

to Stewartstown, but may be said to be general in this part of the country.'[1] 'There was not a single individual of a townland of mine, within a quarter of a mile of Garvagh, that was not visited the night before last, and seven stand of arms taken from them, and last night, several more were taken within a mile of this place.' A man is going through that country as an itinerant astronomer, who is known to be a Dissenting minister, and is believed to be a Belfast emissary. 'The cloth merchants in this county are sending off their half-bleached linen to places of safety. . . . Everyone is looking forward, with anxiety and dread, to the crisis.'[2]

'The Presbyterian ministers,' said Lord Downshire, 'are unquestionably the great encouragers and promoters of sedition, though, as yet, they have had cunning enough to keep their necks out of the halter.'[3] The degree to which the disloyalty had spread was strongly expressed by a Tyrone gentleman, who declared, though with evident exaggeration, that two years, or even one year, before, he could have enrolled 10,000 men, for the support of the civil power, but that now, 'the bad policy and conduct of gentlemen had united all parties.'[4] The Coleraine magistrates adopted the plan of giving licences only to innkeepers who consented to take the oath of allegiance. Ten of the most respectable took it, but they lost all their custom, and the plan was accordingly abandoned.[5]

A general disarming had been suggested, but Lord Castlereagh wrote to Pelham, that he did not think such a measure would be expedient, or, perhaps, possible. He added, however, some remarks, to which later events gave a peculiar significance. 'Certainly,' he said,

[1] Hon. Thos. Knox, Nov. 2.
[2] L. Heyland, Boragh, Dec. 8.
[3] Lord Downshire, Nov. 7.
[4] Mr. Welsh, Cookstown, Nov. 3.
[5] N. Alexander, Nov. 15, 1796.

'since I came to the country, I have had evidence of the extent and danger of the conspiracy, beyond what I was prepared to find, and it is impossible to know that a country is armed in the degree this is, and to have a moral certainty that the people are preparing, and look forward to employ those arms against the State, without entertaining the question whether it is wise to anticipate them, or to wait for their attack in the gross—for in the detail, we are at present suffering from it. The policy entirely depends upon the contingency of their receiving foreign assistance.'[1]

One of the most remarkable facts in this period of Irish history is the tranquillity of the greater part of Catholic Ireland, at the time when both Protestants and Catholics in Ulster were in a condition so nearly approaching anarchy. How far it was loyalty, apathy, or calculation, may be disputed, but the fact cannot be denied. 'I do really believe,' wrote a clergyman, who was accustomed to correspond greatly with the Government, 'that the Catholic priests have more influence than they are willing to acknowledge, and I am fully persuaded, notwithstanding the apparent calm in the southern provinces, that the Papists there, many families of whom have lately emigrated from the North, are fully acquainted with the designs of the same party, who have remained behind.'[2] Seditious violence, however, was at this time confined to Ulster, to a very few points in Leinster, and to a somewhat larger area of Connaught. A gentleman from Ballinrobe, in the county of Mayo, wrote that he had been trying to get up a district corps of yeomen, and had summoned his tenants, and asked them to take the oath of allegiance, but they all positively refused, and he did not venture to place Government arms in their hands. The hills about were said to

[1] Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 4. [2] The Rev. J. Asher, Nov. 22.

be full of arms. Contraband cargoes from France were constantly run into the Killeries, and numerous deserters found a shelter among the mountains. 'The vast numbers of people from the county of Armagh, who have resided for some time among them, may have instilled into the minds of these people some of their own principles.'[1] Sir Edward Newenham stated, in the early part of this year, that a magistrate near Ballintubber, in the county of Roscommon, was accused of having given the Defenders a grove of ash trees, to make pike handles, and that many men in comfortable circumstances had joined them openly. A day or two before the Defenders appear in any district, he said, a man of decent appearance goes through the country, telling the people that the French will soon come to their assistance, that ships have already arrived in the North, that Napper Tandy and Hamilton Rowan will lead them, and that Grattan will defend them in Parliament. When the way is thus prepared, the Defenders appear in small detached bodies, first disarming, and then swearing in the people.

For many miles round Castleblakeney, in the county of Galway, he said, there are very few magistrates, and not more than one or two who have the least idea of their duty. Many are 'trading justices,' 'if not themselves, at least through the means of some ignorant servant or clerk, to whom they often refer the parties for justice. Nothing, I assure you, sir, excites the discontent of the lower classes so much as such conduct; and so accustomed are they to such a traffic, that they make no scruple of offering a bill to any magistrate. It is not taxes that drain the poor. It is their own priests; it is their landlords, changing them from one place to another, and never giving a lease; it is the under

[1] W. Birmingham, December 24.

agents, or stewards, that fleece them. . . . When their mock patriots cease to inflame the minds of the people with the idea of Catholic emancipation, raising wages, taking off all taxes, and various other ideas, equally absurd, and thereby allow peace and harmony to return to the country, industry will flourish. . . . The innumerable little unlicensed whisky-houses are the destruction of the labourers, and a nest for Defenders and every kind of vagabond.'[1]

The anarchy in Ulster did not extend over the whole province. From some counties the Government seem to have received no communications, and from two or three they received communications differing widely from those I have quoted. Lord Blayney, in sending to the Government a list of the yeomanry cavalry, enlisted near Castleblaney, contrasted the 'shameful state of riot which has so long existed in more northern counties,' with the perfect quiet of his own county of Monaghan. 'There is there,' he says, 'the greatest tranquillity and happiness. No soldier is ever permitted to interfere with the laws; and during three assizes and quarter sessions, there never has been occasion to have an examination returned.' 'In the North,' he adds, 'the inhabitants are generally wealthy and obstinate; therefore, all require a plain and proper explanation of all matters from Government, and to be able to place some degree of confidence in their landlords. I am sorry to observe, that confidence between landlord and tenant throughout Ireland in general, is very much lost from the shameful abuse on the part of the former. It will, therefore, behove Government, this session of Parliament, to adopt some wise and salutary laws which meet the approbation of the people, and whatever the laws are, let them be rigidly enforced.'[2]

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[1] E. Newenham, Feb. 26, 1796. [2] Lord Blayney, Nov. 15, 1796.

From Ballinahinch, Lord Moira wrote in the same spirit. The disaffection, he thought, was much exaggerated, and with large classes, the agitation did not spring from a desire for separation. 'It is not here as in England, where I am sure the notion of a parliamentary reform does not at all awaken the interest of the people. Here the middling and lower orders have had it anxiously in view, and have been encouraged to look to it by distinct avowals in Parliament, of existing abuses. The Association of United Irishmen professed to have no other view than the attainment of that object; and whatever nefarious purposes some of them might have covered under that veil, they have succeeded in persuading the country that such was their sole pursuit.' 'There are persons in this country, who have not adverted to the progress that information has been making, and to the knowledge of their own rights, . . . which individuals draw from it. Those gentlemen have used a tone and manner with the common people which might have answered here twenty years ago, although the peasantry in England would not have borne it within the century. The people here have resisted that domineering pretension; by their resistance have irritated the men of rank, and in some places the quarrel has produced deep animosity. . . . To my judgment, there is no other policy than conciliation; and from what I have seen of the country, I can have no doubt that such a tone would quiet everything.'[1]

It was, no doubt, true, as Lord Moira thought, that some of the United Irishmen were rebels because they believed that rebellion alone could give them a tolerable system of parliamentary representation. At the same time, the society, as a whole, had now become undoubtedly seditious and undoubtedly republican. Thomas

[1] Lord Moira, Nov. 6, 1796.

Emmet, in his remarkable sketch of the history of the movement, observes that in the beginning, Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform were the real and ultimate objects of the leaders; that when the first had been to a great degree acquired, and when the latter appeared desperate, a change of objects took place, and that this change was mainly due to the lower classes, who had become vehement republicans and separatists, and who forced the educated and moderate reformers to adopt their views. Even after the leaders had fully agreed to aim at a republic, Emmet believed that they would have been more ready than their poor associates, to abandon the pursuit if reform had been granted.[1]

The leaders of the party emphatically, and I believe sincerely, disavowed all sympathy with assassination; but there is no doubt that murders, and especially murders of witnesses and informers, were frequent in 1796, and they became still more common in the following year. The crime was one already well known in Ireland,[2] and a clause had been introduced into the Insurrection Act to meet it, by making the information of a murdered witness evidence on a trial. Whether these murders were chiefly due to local exasperation, or to combinations among friends of the accused, or whether they were instigated and authorised by societies of United Irishmen, it is not, I think, now possible to determine. There were at this time, many hundreds of these societies scattered over the country, each of

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 104.

[2] Several instances (outside Ulster) were given by Sir Lawrence Parsons, in his speech on the Insurrection Bill. Thus, about four years before that Bill was passed, 'three persons were murdered in succession in the county Tipperary. The first was a witness, the second a witness of his murder, and the third a witness of the second murder.' (Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 168.)

them being a centre of local sedition and agitation, and each of them acting very independently of Belfast and Dublin. There was little communication; writing of every kind was discouraged in order to avoid detection, and it is extremely probable that in some of them, murders were discussed and planned. On the other hand, such a condition of society as I have described, would naturally produce murders independently of any regular organisation, and the greater part of the Ulster outrages, which were not due to the Orangemen, appear to have been due to the Defenders, who were, at first, entirely distinct from the United Irishmen.[1]

These two bodies, however, were now steadily gravitating to one another. Defenderism had everywhere become more or less political, and it was especially so in Ulster. The Catholics in this province seem to have been both more political and more anti-English than those of other parts, and the United Irish leaders, who were chiefly Protestant, and whose very slight knowledge of the Catholic mind was chiefly derived from Ulster, appear to me to have, in consequence, greatly exaggerated both the intensity and the amount of Catholic disaffection. With the exception of a few traders in the chief towns, the Catholics in three provinces seem to have cared very little for politics up to the period of Lord Fitzwilliam's Administration, and their uniform conduct during many troubled years, certainly betrays nothing of the rooted antipathy to British rule, which Tone and Emmet ascribed to them.[2] A

[1] The opposite views of Madden and of McSkimin (the historian of Carrickfergus) on this subject, will be found in Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 534–536. McSkimin, who had great local knowledge, has collected ten cases of murder, or attempted murder, which took place in Ulster in 1796, and were ascribed to the United Irishmen. Two of the victims were magistrates. Most of the others were informers or soldiers.

[2] Thus Emmet says: 'In Ireland, the Catholics in general,

change, however, was now passing over their dispositions, and in 1796 the United Irishmen very generally succeeded in their efforts to incorporate the Defenders into their own body. For some time, the United Irish emissaries had been going among them, endeavouring to learn their views and intentions. They reported that Defenderism was not so much an association, as a mass of associations, with little or no uniformity of views and action, differing in different counties in its tests and signs, and for the most part wasting its strength in partial and ill-directed insurrections against local grievances. As the Defender organisation owed its origin to religious animosities, and consisted exclusively of the most ignorant Catholics, it was very likely to be turned into a mere engine of bigotry, and very unfit for political enterprise. The United Irishmen now made it their business to impress upon the Defenders the great superiority of the United Irish organisation, the necessity of an alliance with the Protestants, the expediency of pursuing only one thing, 'an equal, full, and adequate representation of the people,' which would put an end to religious distinctions and to most of the grievances of which they complained. They at last succeeded, and the Defenders in great bodies took the oath, and were incorporated into the Union. The most turbulent Catholic element in Ireland thus passed into it, and its introduction into the Catholic militia regiments was greatly facilitated.[1]

It was in the autumn and winter of 1796 that Arthur O'Connor, Thomas Addis Emmet, and Dr.

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particularly the poor, had long entertained a rooted wish for separation, which they considered as synonymous with national independence.' (McNevin, p. 104.) We have already seen the similar statements of Tone and McNally.

[1] See Emmet's account of the fusion; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 117–121.

McNevin first formally joined the society, which from this time was to a large extent under their guidance. Tone, Napper Tandy, and Rowan, the most prominent of the original members, had been driven from Ireland, and Rowan appears to have given up all politics. About the same time, the United Irishmen began to give a military organisation to their society. This military organisation was grafted on the civil one, and it was fully elaborated at the close of 1796 and in the beginning of 1797. The secretary of each ordinary committee of twelve was appointed a non-commissioned officer; the delegate of five societies to a lower baronial committee was commonly made a captain, with sixty men under him. The delegate of ten lower baronials to the upper and district committee became a colonel, commanding a battalion of 600 men; the colonels in each county sent in the names of three persons, one of whom was appointed, by the executive Directory, adjutant-general for the county, and it was the duty of these adjutant-generals to communicate directly with the executive. Orders were given that every member of the society should endeavour to procure a gun, bayonet, and ammunition, or, if this was not possible, a pair of pistols, or at least a pike.[1]

In a letter from Arthur O'Connor to C. J. Fox, a copy of which fell into the hands of the Government, the following description is given of the state of public opinion in Ulster. 'The people of the North,' he wrote, 'though perhaps the best educated peasantry of Europe, were violently against any connection with the Papists, and the linen manufacture has always been esteemed a peace offering to the Northerners for the injustice our trade and manufactures have suffered, to aggrandise

[1] See the Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Lords (1798), and the evidence of O'Connor, McNevin, and Emmet.

England. This was the state of things before this war, but now it has undergone a total change. The Presbyterians of the North have sought with uncommon zeal an union with the Catholics and Protestants. They have instituted societies in the nature of masons and friendly brothers, which have spread rapidly throughout the whole island; they bind themselves by a voluntary oath to promote brotherly love and affection amongst Irishmen of every religious persuasion, to promote a reform, and never to disclose anything that passes in the society. This, you may rely on it, is the whole of the test which is termed treasonable, and for which so many of the most respectable people in trade and manufacture have been imprisoned. I speak from certainty, having myself taken the test.' The United Irishmen, he says, wait for 'an opportunity to speak their sentiments,' which will only be when they have 'a decided majority of the nation.' 'The Defenders, who were an unthinking, oppressed people, acting without any rational view, have seen their errors, and are mostly become United Irishmen. But their opponents in Armagh are of a new description. They have an oath which binds them to support the Protestant ascendency, and every underhand means have been used by Government to instigate them against the United Irishmen; but they have begun to see their error, and are joining the Union in great numbers.'[1]

Among the Government informers there was an English Radical, who came over professedly to establish relations between the democrats in the two countries, and who appears to have succeeded in winning the confidence of Neilson, the editor of the 'Northern Star,' as well as of several other members of the party. Neilson, in conversation with him, expressed his belief

[1] A. O'Connor to C. J. Fox, Dec. 24, 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

that in England the Republicans were a minority, but in Ireland a majority, and that the fatal error of the English democratic societies had been their custom of keeping written journals. 'We,' he said, 'commit nothing to paper. We assemble in small numbers, and without any predetermined place, and when our numbers exceed thirty-five we split, and the overplus lays the foundation of a new society.' The independence of Ireland, he thought, must necessarily come, and it 'would be no more injurious to England than the emancipation of America was, which, says Neilson, by increasing her exports, has increased her wealth. . . . What England lost in prerogative, she would gain in commerce.' The informer asked his opinion about the Catholics and the Defenders. 'The Catholics,' Neilson answered, 'have many enlightened men and true patriots among them, but he feared the great mass were bigots to monarchy. Their number,' says Neilson, 'makes them very formidable; their wrongs make them desperate, and though they would most probably render no good by themselves, yet with proper rulers they might be made of very great service to the cause, and so might the Defenders, could they be properly organised; at present they are nothing more than an undisciplined rabble.' According to the information received by this informer, there were nearly forty United Irish societies in Belfast alone. They consisted generally of thirty-five members each, never of more than forty. Belfast and Dungannon were both centres of authority, and each had several hundred clubs depending on it. Neilson was confident that 35,000 men could be brought into the field in Ulster, 'mostly armed and disciplined.' If the clubs were divided into three equal parts, two would be found to consist of Presbyterians and Deists, the third of Catholics and members of the Established Church. When a new society was introduced

into any place, printed instructions, copies of the test, &c., were sent from Belfast. When the society was full, it gave notice to Belfast, and was empowered to form a new one. No one was permitted to form a club who was not furnished with a certificate from the central committee at Belfast. With this certificate, a man might take tests and create new clubs in any part of Ireland. Any member who completed ten clubs was chosen a member of the chief committee.[1]

Our information about the proceedings of the United Irishmen outside Ulster is less complete, but on the first day of 1797 McNally wrote a very alarming letter on the subject. 'The county of Meath,' he said, 'though everywhere quiet, is not the less resolved upon the principle of separation from England. . . . As I told you before, it pervades, and it rises into, the upper classes everywhere.' It was calculated by the United Irishmen that, irrespectively of the militia and yeomanry, there were at this time only 20,000 soldiers in Ireland, and that a rising might succeed without French assistance. Such a rising, McNally said, was certainly in contemplation, and the first step would be to seize those who were in high Government situations. Very few of the original United Irishmen had fallen away. 'That principle,' he continued, 'I conceive to be now so general and so rooted, that in my opinion no change of Administration, no representation of the people with which a House of Lords could possibly exist, would have force or influence to weaken it. The principle springs from republicanism, and demands . . . that all honours, stations, offices, &c., shall rise up from the

[1] Information of Edward Smith, 1796. (I.S.P.O.) The true name of this informer was Bird. He appears to have been a man of very bad character, and the United Irishmen soon found out his real objects. (See J. W., Oct. 9, 1796.) Like some others, he played a double game, and at last quarrelled with the Government. Many particulars about him will be found in Madden.

people through the medium of election, and not flow down from the executive power.'[1]

The difference of opinion between the English and the Irish Governments relating to the Insurrection Act still continued. Camden wrote strongly asserting the necessity of putting it into immediate action over a great part of the North. The state of the neighbourhood of Belfast, and of the counties of Down, Antrim, and Armagh, was very bad. There was an organised system of terrorism. Magistrates could get no information. Active magistrates, informers, and even men who had merely taken the oath of allegiance, were threatened with assassination. Within ten days, two magistrates had been fired at; two informers had lately been murdered, as well as a man who insisted on remaining with his troop. 'Immense crowds have assembled, have cut the corn, and dug the potatoes of the persons now confined for high treason in the county gaols, and in Dublin.' Ten barrels of gunpowder had just been stolen from the stores at Belfast.[2] In Down, at least, it was absolutely necessary to issue the proclamation, and twenty-four magistrates of the county asked for it. Portland, on the other hand, expressed his earnest hope that 'the tremendous power of proclaiming districts out of the King's peace, which the law of last session very wisely placed in the hands of Government, may remain suspended, and that the awe of it may be sufficient to restore subordination and tranquillity, without having recourse to more exemplary acts of severity.'[3] He yielded, however, to the representation of the Irish Government; some large districts were put under proclamation, and Lord Carhampton was sent to take the command in the North.

[1] J. W., Jan. 1, 1797.
[2] Camden to Portland, Nov. 1, 1796.
[3] Portland to Camden, Nov. 5, 1796.

The last confidential reports of the Lord Lieutenant during 1796 seem to indicate some slight improvement in Ulster. The districts round Newry, he said, had been proclaimed with complete success, and were now quiet. Belfast was equally so, probably through fear of the Insurrection Act. In the county of Antrim, the magistrates were disinclined to adopt the Act, and no acts of outrage had lately been committed there, though the dispositions of the people were unchanged. 'I am sorry to add,' writes the Lord Lieutenant, 'that Lord O'Neil and some principal gentlemen of that county seem to have partaken of the frenzy of that neighbourhood [Belfast], so far as to wish to pass some resolutions at a county meeting expressive of their opinion, that a reform of Parliament is necessary to reconcile the minds of the people at this period.' Lord Carhampton is doing his utmost to prevent such resolutions from being brought forward. At Belfast, where Carhampton has been in his magisterial capacity, he believes that he has discovered 'the designs of a set of men called the Assassination Committee, who marked out and actually ordered the assassination of various persons. Four of the principal persons have been taken up upon the charge of conspiring to murder, . . . upon information which I hope will certainly lead to their conviction.'

The terrorism was such, that for some time 'scarcely one of Lord Londonderry's tenants would dare to speak to him, if they met him on the road, or would even show him the slightest mark of respect. . . . In the county of Tyrone, Mr. Stewart, the member of it, has experienced the same sort of treatment,' though 'he has always been the strenuous advocate of parliamentary reform, and has wished to substitute some other mode of paying the clergy, for tithes.' On Lord Londonderry's estate, however, there had been a sudden change, owing in a great degree to the ability of his son, Lord Castle-

reagh. 1,700 men had come forward to take the oath of allegiance, and he could easily raise a corps of yeomanry, if he could only select those who were to be depended on. On the whole, the state of Ulster seemed better, except the county of Derry, where there was much difficulty to be encountered, 'from the almost total dearth of gentlemen who inhabit that county.'[1]

Still, it seemed impossible to be sure that a spark might not produce explosion, and the condition of Europe was such, that an Irish insurrection would at this time have been peculiarly terrible. On sea, indeed, the flag of England still flew very high, and she had added largely to her colonial possessions. The French had been defeated by Howe in a great battle at Ushant on June 1, 1794; they had been defeated in the following year by Hotham at Savona, and by Bridport at L'Orient and at the Hyères islands. In August 1796, Elphinstone, with a superior force, had surrounded and captured a Dutch squadron of six ships of war in Saldhana Bay. Pondicherry in the East Indies, Tobago, Martinique, Guadaloupe, and San Lucia in the West Indies, had been taken from the French; and when Holland passed under French domination, England, with little difficulty, had seized all her colonies—Ceylon, the Malacca Isles, the Dutch establishments on the Malabar coast; the Cape of Good Hope; Demerara, Essequebo, and the Moluccas. But on the continent of Europe, the star of France seemed now rising rapidly to the ascendant. The coalition against her was shattered and dissolved, and England was entering into one of the darkest periods of her history. Belgium had been annexed to France. Holland was completely subdued, and early in 1795 the newly constructed Batavian Republic concluded an offensive alliance against England, which gave

[1] Camden to Portland, Dec. 13, 1796.

France the command of the navy of a people who had always proved themselves among the best sailors in Europe, and of all the ports and maritime resources of a coast extending from Texel to the Pyrenees. Tuscany about the same time made a separate peace, and a few months later the whole aspect of Europe was changed by the news, that Prussia and the other Northern States of Germany had broken away from the coalition, and had signed a peace at Basle which left France the undisputed mistress of the left bank of the Rhine. The Royalist insurrection which England had supported in Brittany, was crushed. Spain made peace with France in July 1795, and in the October of the following year she declared war against England, bringing a new and considerable fleet to dispute the English empire of the sea. In Germany, it is true, the tide of victory more than once ebbed and flowed, but the great victories of the Archduke Charles in 1796 were much more than counterbalanced by the victories of Buonaparte in Italy. In the course of 1796 and the first months of 1797, almost all its states had been either crushed or intimidated into treaties of submission, and the King of the Two Sicilies and the Republic of Genoa had conspicuously closed their ports against British ships.

At home, meanwhile, discontent, disaffection, and financial embarrassment were steadily increasing, and the English National Debt, swollen by enormous subsidies to faithless allies, augmented with appalling rapidity. Pitt anxiously looked forward to peace, but his efforts met with no success. In the February of 1796, Wickham, who was British Minister in Switzerland, had been instructed to sound, through Barthélemy, the disposition of the Directory, but his overtures were promptly and scornfully rejected.[1] In the following

[1] See Wickham's *Correspondence*, i. 269–274, 312–314; *Annual Register*, 1796, pp. 125, 126.

October, Lord Auckland published, with the sanction of Pitt, a pamphlet which was intended to prepare the public mind for a peace, and at the same time a new English application was made to the Directory. It was most ungraciously received, but they at length agreed to grant passports for an official negotiation, and under these circumstances Lord Malmesbury went to Paris.

The negotiation, however, was almost hopeless. The Directory had no real wish for peace, and they from the beginning declared their belief that England was insincere in her intentions, and only sought, by an apparent desire for peace, to obtain increased supplies, and to quell the murmurs of a discontented nation. Fox and the rest of the separate Whig party took up the same cry, while Burke bitterly denounced the negotiation as a new humiliation to England. When some one said that Lord Malmesbury found the road to Paris a long one, Burke answered that this was not surprising, 'as he went the whole way on his knees.' It was soon evident that England would not make a separate peace, which alone the Directory desired; and when the question of the restoration of Belgium to the Emperor was raised, the negotiations speedily terminated. England, indeed, was ready to purchase that cession by the surrender of all her own conquests from France; but the Directory at once refused, and on December 19 they ordered Lord Malmesbury to leave Paris in forty-eight hours. It was noticed that the funds at this time sank lower than at any period of the American war, and the drain of specie had already begun, which soon after obliged the Bank of England to suspend cash payments. It was under such circumstances, that the news arrived that a great French fleet had reached the coast of Ireland, and had cast its anchors in Bantry Bay.

In order to understand the circumstances under which this fleet was despatched, it will be necessary to recur

for a few moments to the proceedings of Wolfe Tone. We have seen that this conspirator had been deeply implicated in the affairs of Jackson, and that after the suicide of Jackson, in the spring of 1795, he had, through the influence of the Beresfords, obtained permission from the Government to emigrate to America. The journey was safely accomplished, though the ship was boarded by an English man-of-war, and Tone was very nearly pressed for the navy. A curious letter, which he wrote to his dear friend Thomas Russell just after his arrival, was intercepted and seized by the Government, and it gives a graphic picture of his first impressions. Like many later revolutionists, he speedily learnt that it is a profound error to regard the Americans as a revolutionary people, less attached to order and authority, and more prone to political innovation and experiment, than the English; and he frankly confessed that he had seen enough of them, or at least of the Philadelphians, to regard them with 'unqualified dislike.' Public affairs in America appeared to him nearly as much under the influence of an aristocracy as at home, only it was an aristocracy of merchants and money makers. Washington was 'a very honest man, and a sincere American according to his own theory,' but he was 'a high-flying aristocrat,' and it was a matter of great congratulation that his influence seemed waning. For his own part, Tone said, the subversion of all forms of aristocracy seemed to him the first essential of liberty. 'To borrow Grattan's expression, when he was surprised by his passion into a fit of honesty, "Liberty must extinguish aristocracy, or aristocracy will extinguish her."'[1]

[1] September 1, 1795. (I.S.P.O.) Rowan also greatly disliked America. 'The aristocracy of wealth here,' he wrote, 'is insupportable, for it is mixed with the grossest ignorance. . . . The House of Congress is become a boxing school, the Speaker giving challenges from the chair. . . . If this is a specimen of a demo-

Philadelphia, where Tone now found himself, was at this time a great centre of Irish immigration and influence in America. 'It is a fact,' wrote Franklin in 1784, 'that the Irish emigrants and their children are now in possession of the government of Pennsylvania by their majority in the Assembly, as well as of a great part of the territory; and I remember well the first ship that brought any of them over.'[1] The success, however, of a considerable minority of Irishmen in this colony, must not disguise the fact that the large majority were penniless immigrants, who, at the very moment of landing, fell into the hands of dishonest contractors, and were reduced for long periods to a condition but little removed from slavery. Hamilton Rowan speaks bitterly of the 'harpies' that awaited them, and added, 'The members of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery have not the least objection to buying an Irishman or a Dutchman, and will chaffer with himself or the captain to get him indented at about the eighth part of the wages they would have to pay a *country born*.'[2]

Although no stipulation appears to have been made with Tone about abstaining from politics, a man of high and delicate honour, who had left his country under such circumstances as I have described, would have considered himself under a tacit obligation. Such feelings, however, are very rarely found among men who have

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cratic republic, Lord help us, sufferers in the cause! . . . The moment I can leave this country without injuring my family, I will do so. . . . Over and over again do I say, if I am to live under the lash of arbitrary power, at least let the whip be in the hands of those accustomed to use it, not picked up by a foot passenger, who, unaccustomed to ride, keeps flogging every post and rail he comes near.' (Rowan's *Autobiography*, pp. 300, 321, 323.)

[1] Franklin's *Works*, x. 131.

[2] Rowan's *Autobiography*, p. 318. In another letter, Rowan writes: 'Swarms of Irish are expected here by the spring vessels, and the brisk trade for *Irish slaves* here is to make up for the low price of flax seed!' (Ibid.)

once drunk of the intoxicating cup of political conspiracy, and Wolfe Tone was no exception to the common rule. He found at Philadelphia his old friends and fellow-conspirators, Dr. Reynolds, Napper Tandy, and Hamilton Rowan. He immediately entered into close relations with the French Minister to the United States, and soon after, in obedience to urgent letters from Ireland, he undertook a mission to France for the purpose of inducing the French Government to invade Ireland.

The missions of Bancroft, Coquebert, Oswald, Jackson, and perhaps other agents, had already shown the interest of the French in Irish affairs, but it was not until the December of 1795 that an invasion of Ireland appears to have been seriously contemplated in Paris. A long report was in that month presented to the Directory by De la Croix, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, representing the enormous advantages France would derive from a separation of Ireland from England, and informing them that despatches had been received from Adet, the French Minister at Philadelphia, announcing the arrival in that city of Wolfe Tone, to ask in the name of his countrymen for the assistance of France. Adet strongly recommended Tone to the consideration of the French Government; reminded them that he had a brother who had recently enlisted in the French service, and inclosed a memoir, written by Tone in the preceding summer, representing insurrection in Ireland as certain if the French would assist. De la Croix considered the project of invasion worthy of the most serious consideration, and, as it must be prepared in France, he demanded the authorisation of the Directory to invite Tone to Paris.

A French translation of the memoir accompanied the despatch. Ireland, the writer boldly said, was the chief source of the astonishing power which England had hitherto displayed. In the eighteen months of the

present war, she had furnished to England 120,000 soldiers; and, according to the most accurate computations, two-thirds of the sailors in the British navy were Irishmen. From Ireland, England derives the whole of the salted provisions required for her fleet and her West Indian colonies; much the largest part of her skins and tallow; a great part of the stuffs with which she clothed her sailors. By separating Ireland from England, France would give a vital blow to her rival, and the time for such an achievement had fully come. Since the Revolution of 1688, the Government of Ireland had been a continued tyranny, and it had been the main object of English statesmen, by corrupting the Legislature and sowing division between the sects, to prevent her from shaking off the yoke. For a time during the American war their policy was baffled, but they succeeded at last in suppressing and disarming the volunteers, and substituting for them a militia, and from that date the eyes of Irish patriots were steadily turned to France. The Irish had taken every means to acquaint France with their anxiety to be helped, and the French Committee of Public Safety had responded by sending Jackson to Ireland. Hamilton Rowan was the chief man in the conspiracy. But the arrest of Jackson had disconcerted the plot; those who were mentioned in his letters were obliged to fly, and they were now at Philadelphia.

A passage follows which is extremely curious as showing the light in which the Fitzwilliam episode was now regarded or represented in Ireland. 'The British Government,' says the writer, 'terrified at the danger their despotism had just incurred in the attempt of the Irish to shake off their yoke, adopted the secret resolution to crush them altogether, by suppressing their Parliament, and bringing them under the laws of the Parliament of England. In order to succeed in this enterprise, it was necessary to gain the Catholics, and

to make use of them as an instrument to force the Anglicans and Dissenters to consent to an union. The moment seemed propitious, as the Catholics were at this very time soliciting their emancipation; that is, their restoration to the full rights of citizenship, of which they had for centuries been deprived. The Government did not doubt that the Catholics would gladly accept any condition of which this emancipation was the price. . . . Lord Fitzwilliam was accordingly sent as viceroy to Ireland to treat with them, and to effect the union as soon as possible.' Fitzwilliam, however, the writer continues, perhaps shocked at the treacherous task imposed on him, suffered the secret to leak out, and the Irish, warned of the danger that menaced them, joined more closely against their oppressor. The Catholics led the way. 'Assembled in the month of April last, to deliberate on the object of their petition,[1] they unanimously determined that no offer on the part of the Government, however advantageous it might be, even though it were complete and absolute emancipation, should separate them from their brethren the Anglicans and Presbyterians, and prevent them from making common cause with them in opposing with all their force, and to the last drop of their blood, the projected union. Deputations of the Anglicans and Dissenters assisted at this assembly, and from this moment the three parties, so violently opposed, became one.' From this time, the memoir concludes, 'the Irish have in different counties centres of revolution, and their ramifications extend to the principal towns in North America, where there may be found a prodigious number of their fellow-countrymen quite as much interested as themselves, in the happiness and regeneration of their mother country; but it is principally at Philadelphia that the most im-

[1] *Réclamation.*

portant meetings are held. It is from there that their arms are constantly stretched towards France, demanding her aid.'[1]

The great improbability of Irish agents being able to go to Paris without being detected by English spies, had induced the Irish seditious party to carry on their negotiations with the French Government mainly through French Ministers in neutral countries. Shortly after the negotiation at Philadelphia, another independent and very important one took place at Hamburg. The reader may remember, in the negotiations that preceded the French war, the part which was played by Reinhard, who was then secretary to Chauvelin; he was now French Minister Plenipotentiary to the Hanseatic Towns, and his letters from Hamburg and from Altona form an important part of the secret history of Ireland, in the period immediately preceding the rebellion.

On May 18, 1796, he wrote to De la Croix that he had received a visit from an Irishman, who was very anxious that his name should be concealed, but whose name Reinhard considered it his duty to disclose in confidence to the French Minister. It was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who had just arrived at Hamburg. Reinhard had already made his acquaintance in London, and Fitzgerald reminded him of certain communications,

[1] French Foreign Office. The only signature to this memoir is that of Madgett, who was employed to make the translation, but it is acknowledged by Tone, who says: 'It was written in the burning summer of Pennsylvania, when my head was extremely deranged by the heat.' (*Memoirs*, ii. 36.) About the same time as this memoir, two other independent memoirs, on the affairs of Ireland, were presented to the French Government by an Irishman named Duckett, who represented himself as having recently travelled through Ireland, and who appears to have been much about the French Government. Tone suspected him of being a spy, but there was no foundation for the suspicion, though Duckett seems to have acted very much for himself, independently of the United Irishmen.

which some of the Irish deputies who had been sent over to petition the English Government in December 1792, had then had with Chauvelin. Chauvelin had not received them with all the interest the importance of the matter demanded. At that time, too, the Irish did not dare to propose or promise what they had decided to do now; they still hoped for a redress of grievances, and the French Republic was scarcely formed. Now, however, Lord Edward said, the French Republic is consolidated. Ireland is ripe for insurrection. The discontent is no longer confined to a party. The whole nation has been deceived, and since the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam no further reserve is necessary.[1] Lord Edward added, that he had come to Hamburg specially to open a negotiation with Reinhard, and determined to risk the journey to Paris if Reinhard was not accessible, and he begged Reinhard to obtain authority from Paris to conduct it. He talked of 150,000 men rising; of 10,000 Defenders who were armed and ready. Cannon, guns, and gunpowder, however, were urgently needed, for during the past year the Government had been disarming the Irish. The appearance of a French fleet would be the signal for a general insurrection; but until the French arrived, an unarmed people could do nothing. The Irish priests would not oppose, and would even favour, the movement; and Fitzgerald counted much on Paine to frame a plan of internal organisation.

Reinhard appears to have been a man of much ability and judgment, and he read the character of Fitzgerald very truly. He was a young man, he said, incapable of falsehood or perfidy, frank, energetic, and likely to be a useful and devoted instrument, but with

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[1] 'Nous n'avons plus rien à ménager depuis le rappel de Lord Fitzwilliam.'

no experience or extraordinary talent, and entirely unfit to be chief of a great party, or leader in a difficult enterprise. At the same time, if an insurrection could be produced in Ireland, it would be of the utmost importance to France.[1]

In the following month, however, Lord Edward reappeared, with a companion who impressed Reinhard as a far abler man. Reinhard thought the matter so important, that he not only wrote the account to his Government in cipher, but added an urgent note, begging that only the most confidential official in the French Foreign Office should be entrusted with the duty of deciphering it. The new arrival was Arthur O'Connor—one of the first orators, Reinhard said, in Ireland, a man of great position and weight. He fully confirmed all that Lord Edward had said about the disposition of the Irish, and the certainty of the success of a French intervention. Representing the Catholics of the South, he had recently travelled among the Dissenters of the North, and found the latter even more determined than the former to rebel. He said that the militia would go with the people; that it would be perfectly easy to seize Cork, Waterford, and even Dublin; that the country was ripe for a general insurrection, and that the manner in which the English Government were seizing, almost without distinction of rank and age, all suspected persons for the navy, had raised the indignation of the people to the highest point. Guns, munitions, artillery officers and a few troops were needed. O'Connor believed that the effective English soldiers in Ireland were not more than 10,000 or 12,000, and that an insurrection in Ireland would make it impossible for England to continue the war. 'We only want your help,' he said, 'in the first moment; in two

[1] Reinhard to De la Croix, 29 floréal, an iv. (F.F.O.)

months we should have 100,000 men under arms; we ask your assistance only because we know it is your own clear interest to give it, and only on condition that you leave us absolute masters to frame our government as we please.' O'Connor announced his intention of going secretly with Fitzgerald to Paris. He had told his friends in London that he was going to travel in Switzerland, and he begged to receive, through Barthélemy, who was French Minister in that country, a permission from the Directory. Reinhard adds, that O'Connor had dispelled every doubt in his mind about the accuracy of the representations of Fitzgerald, and that he would answer for the sincerity of Fitzgerald with his head.[1]

The French Government were, by this time, very seriously engaged in planning an Irish expedition, and were acting, in a great measure, upon the information they received from Wolfe Tone. He had sailed from Sandy Hook on the first day of 1796, arrived at Havre a month later, and at once proceeded to Paris. He knew no one there. He was almost wholly ignorant of the language, and he had very little money, but the letters of Adet had prepared his way, and by the assistance of Monroe, the American Minister at Paris, he at once obtained access to De la Croix, and soon after to Carnot, the great military organiser in the Directory. By Carnot he was put in connection with a French general named Clarke,[2] who, being the son of an Irishman, spoke English perfectly, and who bore a large part in preparing the expedition. The French Ministers were evidently much impressed with the ability, the energy, and the disinterestedness of Tone, and when the project had nearly come to its maturity, they gave him the rank of adjutant-general in the French army. He

[1] Reinhard to De la Croix, 18 prairial, 1 messidor, an iv. (June 6, 19, 1796. F.F.O.)

[2] Afterwards Duc de Feltre.

desired French rank greatly, partly on account of the pay, of which he was in urgent need,[1] and of the recognised place it would give him in the expedition, but partly also, because he trusted that it would save him, in the event of a capture, from the ignominious death of a traitor—a death from which Tone, though an eminently brave man, shrank with even more than common horror.[2] Many months, however, passed in weary expectations and disappointed hopes, rendered doubly bitter by that intense home sickness, that continual longing for his absent wife and children, and for two or three Irish friends, which was the most amiable feature of his character. 'I will endeavour,' he wrote on his thirty-third birthday, 'to keep myself as pure as I can, as to the means. As to the end, it is sacred—the liberty and independence of my country first, the establishment of my wife and of our darling babies next, and last, I hope, a well-earned reputation.' 'It is now,' he wrote, some time later, 'exactly seven months and five days since I arrived in Paris—a very important era in my life; whether it was for good or evil to my country and to myself, the event must determine; but I can safely say, I have acted all through to the very best of my conscience and judgment, and I think I have not conducted myself ill.'[3]

The journals which he kept during this period, for the sake of his wife and children and of a few intimate friends, are singularly interesting, not only for their bearing on Irish history, but also as furnishing an excellent example of self-portraiture, and an admirably vivid picture of the aspect of Paris in the stirring days of the Directory. It was a time when France had no

[1] 'Here I am with exactly two louis in my exchequer, negotiating with the French Government, and planning revolutions.' (Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 147.)

[2] Tone's *Memoirs*, p. 71.

[3] Ibid. pp. 130, 180.

less than fourteen armies on foot; when Naples and Spain had just detached themselves from the great alliance against her; when Montenotte, and the conquest of Italy which so speedily followed, first revealed to the world the rising genius of Buonaparte. The boundless spirit of adventure, the reckless gaiety, the genuine though theatrical heroism and patriotism, that inspired the nation, filled the young Irishman with astonishment and delight. He was present at the Fête de la Jeunesse, in the Church of St. Roch, when the statue of Liberty, surrounded with a blaze of lights, stood before the altar, and the walls were decorated with the national colours, and the municipality were assembled, and all the youth of the district who had attained the age of sixteen were led in procession to receive from veteran soldiers their arms, while the church rang with the thunders of the 'Marseillaise,' and he contrasted the scene with the gangs of wretched recruits he had seen in Ireland, marched handcuffed to the regiments. He described with a few skilful touches the soldiers of the Revolution—ill mounted, slovenly in their march and their manœuvres, each soldier wearing much what he pleased, provided his coat was blue and his hat cocked, the Grenadiers insisting on having their cravats tied in the height of the fashion, and on wearing their hats in whatever shape or form they conceived became them the best; every sentinel with his little bouquet in his hat, or in his breast, or in the barrel of his firelock, but all glowing with high spirits, with sharp, quick, penetrating countenances, and a fire and animation of manner that plainly indicated ardent and impetuous courage; and he remarked with justice the peculiar character of adventure and enthusiasm imparted to a war in which all the leaders were very young men. Pichegru, he said, who was the oldest general, was about thirty-six, Jourdain was thirty-five, Hoche was

thirty-two, Moreau was about thirty, Buonaparte was only twenty-nine. He was astonished to find in France a gaiety equal to any in Ireland, without that hard drinking from which in Ireland it was deemed almost inseparable; shocked at a dissoluteness, both in principle and practice, in all matters relating to women, to which he had been wholly unaccustomed at home; perplexed at the strain of sentiment, that could bear without flinching the execution of hundreds on the guillotine, but at the same time made it necessary to rewrite 'Othello,' saving the life of Desdemona, as the catastrophe in Shakespeare would offend 'the humanity of the French nation.' The theatres had never been more brilliant or more popular, and Tone has left admirable descriptions of the acting, and of the military displays which now replaced the ballets of the monarchy upon the stage; and he wandered among the masterpieces in the Louvre, and with true eighteenth-century taste pronounced Guido to be the first of painters, and the Magdalen of Lebrun to be worth all the other pictures in the gallery.

All this time, however, he never for a moment forgot the mission he had undertaken, and in the perfect candour of his journals we can trace most clearly the various motives that actuated him. There was much of the spirit of an ambitious adventurer, who hoped to carve his way, amid the stormy scenes that were opening, to wealth and power and fame. There was much of the spirit of the revolutionist, to whom the democratic ideal of Rousseau had become almost what religion is to a devotee. There was also a true strain of self-sacrificing patriotism; a real sense of the degradation of his country, the corruption of her Government and the poverty of her people, but, like much Irish patriotism, that of Tone was mixed with great levity, and was largely compounded of hatreds. He hated and despised

the Parliament of Ireland. He hated the Irish country gentry. He hated the Whig Club, and always remembered with bitterness how Grattan had warned the Catholic Committee against him; but above all things he hated England as the main cause of the evils of Ireland, and looked forward with passionate eagerness to her downfall.

Yet not many years had passed since Tone had sent to Pitt and Grenville memorials of a project for establishing a military colony in the South Sea, for the purpose of assisting England in war with Spain, and if these memorials had been acted on, and Pitt had thrown the young adventurer into a career of enterprise under the English flag, he has himself acknowledged that it is extremely improbable that he would have ever been heard of as an Irish rebel.[1] Even after he had been deeply immersed in the conspiracy, even at the time when he was obliged to leave Ireland, he appears to have been perfectly prepared to abandon Irish politics if the Government he deemed so odious would provide for him in the East Indies.[2] He was not a bloodthirsty man, and he was sincerely anxious that rebellion in Ireland should be as little sanguinary as possible, but he distinctly contemplated a massacre of the gentry as

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[1] *Memoirs*, i. 26, 27, 36, 37. His friend Russell (who was afterwards hanged for treason) joined him in this overture to Pitt. 'The minister's refusal,' Tone says, 'did not sweeten us much towards him. I renewed the vow I had once before made, to make him, if I could, repent of it, in which Russell most heartily concurred.'

[2] His son, speaking of Wolfe Tone's conduct after the arrest of Jackson, says: 'He considered his duty to his country paramount to any personal feeling or consideration. . . . Even in that extreme peril, he constantly refused to tie his hands by any engagement for the future. He would, however, have accepted the offer which they made at first, to send him to the East Indies, out of the road of European politics; perhaps they feared him even there, when they altered their minds.' (*Memoirs*, i. 120.)

a possible consequence of what he was doing, and he became more and more callous about the means that were to be employed. A proclamation was stated in France to have been issued by the United Irishmen enjoining that all Irishmen in the British service who were captured with arms in their hands should be instantly shot. Tone expressed his warm approval of the measure, and even claimed to have been its first proposer.[1] He opposed a French project for landing a devastating force in Ireland to prey upon the property of the country, but he supported, though not without evident qualms of conscience, an atrocious scheme for landing some thousand criminals in England, and commissioning them to burn Bristol, and commit every kind of depredation in their power. 'My heart,' he wrote very candidly, 'is hardening hourly, and I satisfy myself now at once on points which would have staggered me twelve months ago.' 'I do not think my morality or feeling is much improved by my promotion to the rank of adjutant-general. The truth is, I hate the very name of England. I hated her before my exile, and I will hate her always.'[2]

He represented to the French Ministers that it was

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. p. 509. In judging Tone's language on this subject, it should be remembered that Paine at the beginning of the American war had, in a very famous pamphlet, urged the Americans to adopt the same course in dealing with the American loyalists, and that the American Congress in 1777 had passed a resolution ordering all Americans taken in arms in the British service to be punished as traitors. See *Hist. of England*, iv. 235, 478. Tone had seen how the French loyalists had been treated in La Vendée, and he knew that his own life, if he was taken in rebellion, would not be spared.

[2] *Memoirs*, ii. 89, 241. The instructions drawn up by Carnot for what he termed the Chouanerie, in England, are printed in full by the Marquis de Grouchy in his little work called, *Le Général de Grouchy et l'Irlande en* 1796, pp. 16-28. See also a number of curious despatches from the French archives, in M. Guillon's *La France et l'Irlande pendant la Révolution*. Twelve or fifteen hundred French bandits, under the command of an American

hopeless to expect a successful, or even a considerable, independent Irish rebellion, but that if a French army effected a lodgment in Ireland, and if they brought with them a large quantity of arms for distribution, they would certainly be joined at once by the great body of the Presbyterians and of the Catholic peasantry, and on the first reasonable prospect of success, by the whole, or the majority, of the Irish militia. If 20,000 French troops were landed, success, he said, would be certain, and almost without resistance. In that case, the landing should be effected near Dublin, which could most easily be captured. The smallest force that could be expected to succeed was 5,000 men, and if the French determined not to exceed this number, they must land as near Belfast as possible, push forward, so as to secure the Mourne Mountains and the Fews, which, with Lough Erne, would enable them to cover the whole province of Ulster, and then endeavour to hold their ground till the country was in arms to support them. The chance of success, in that case, would be greatly increased if a small additional force could be landed in Galway Bay, could secure a line of defence on the Shannon, and could produce a rising in Connaught. If a smaller force was sent, he begged that he might be allowed to accompany it, but he was of opinion that success would be hopeless, as it would be crushed before a rising could be effected. There were, he believed, exclusive of the militia, nine regiments of dragoons, two regiments of troops of the line, and eighteen of fencibles in Ireland, but the regiments of the line were probably mere skeletons, sent to Ireland to recruit; there were certainly not more than

adventurer named Tate, were actually landed in Pembrokeshire in February 1797, but the volunteers and militia, assisted by the countrymen, captured them all without the loss of a man. (See Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 9; Guillon, pp. 296, 297; *History of the real and threatened Invasions of England from the Landing of Julius Cæsar* [1798], pp. 199–203.)

500 men in each regiment of fencibles, and he doubted whether the whole regular military force exceeded 12,000 men. There were 18,000 militia, but 16,000 of them were Catholics, and a great proportion were sworn Defenders.

He found, among the French Ministers, an extreme ignorance of Irish affairs. He was asked, to his great astonishment, whether some use might not be made in the rebellion of Lord Clare, whether Lord Ormond would not take part in it, whether the aristocracy would not, as in 1782, put themselves at the head of the popular movement, whether Ireland was not still devoted to the Stuarts? He urged upon the French authorities that the reports on Irish affairs, which had been for many years in their archives, could only mislead them, for France, herself, had hardly changed more essentially than Ireland, since 1789. 'As to royalty and aristocracy,' he said, 'they were both odious in Ireland to that degree, that I apprehended much more a general massacre of the gentry, and a distribution of the entire of their property, than the establishment of any form of government that would perpetuate their influence,' and he assured the French that there was no living Irishman the least likely to be raised to the throne, and that the establishment of an Irish republic would be the certain consequence of separation. On the religious aspect of the question, he was equally confident. There was no disposition to set up a Catholic establishment. Tithes would be simply abolished, and each sect would pay its own clergy voluntarily. The priests hated the French Revolution, and they should never be employed, and never trusted; but, with a little tact, no serious opposition from them was to be feared. Their influence, also, had of late years enormously declined. The real leaders of the Catholics were ardent republicans, closely allied with the Presbyterians of the North, and the mass of

the Catholic peasantry had enrolled themselves as Defenders, and steadily persisted in the organisation, though all who belonged to it had been excommunicated by the legate of the Pope, and though the priests refused them the Sacraments, even *in articulo mortis*. Few things gave Tone more pleasure than the conquest of the Pope by the armies of the Revolution. 'I am heartily glad,' he wrote, 'that old priest is at last laid under contribution in his turn. Many a long century, he and his predecessors have been fleecing all Europe, but the day of retribution is come at last; and I am strongly tempted to hope that this is but the beginning of his sorrows.' He suggested that pressure might now be put upon him, to make him influence the priests, in favour of the French designs in Ireland. In one of his addresses to the people of Ireland, Tone urged that republicanism must finally subvert monarchy, 'as the Mosaic law subverted idolatry; as Christianity subverted the Jewish dispensation; as the Reformation subverted Popery.'[1]

He presented two memorials on the state of Ireland, which appear to have represented his genuine opinions, though the event clearly showed them to be full of the grossest miscalculations of the popular feeling. The population of Ireland, he said in 1796, was, according to the best computations, about 4,500,000. Of these, 450,000 were members of the Established Church, who were still 'a colony of strangers' in the country, possessing, chiefly through confiscation, five-sixths of its landed property, holding in their hands all the force of the Government, all the appointments in the Church, the army, the law, the revenue, and every department of the State, and constantly looking to England for protection

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 274. See, too, p. 144, and also his outburst of delight when the Pope was dethroned, and the temporal power destroyed. (Pp. 464–466.)

and support. From these, nothing could be expected but uncompromising resistance, but they were only a tenth part of the population, and their strength was entirely artificial, composed of the power and influence which the patronage of the Government gave them.

The second division consisted of the Protestant Dissenters, who numbered 900,000 souls.[1] They were especially powerful in the middle classes; they formed the bulk of the volunteer army of 1782, and they were the most intelligent, the best informed, the most energetic section of the population. 'They are all, to a man, sincere republicans, and devoted, with enthusiasm, to the cause of liberty and France. They would make, perhaps, the best soldiers in Ireland, and are already, in a considerable degree, trained to arms.' Hitherto, 'in all the civil wars of Ireland, they ranged themselves under the standard of England, and were the most formidable enemies of the Catholic natives, whom they detested as Papists, and despised as slaves.' In 1790, however, the French Revolution produced a great revulsion of opinion among them. They saw that the danger from Popery had disappeared. They caught the contagion of the new spirit of liberty that was abroad. They perceived the fatal consequences of division, and in spite of all the efforts of the English Government and the native aristocracy, they had formed an union with the Catholics, which was the capital fact of the present situation of Ireland.

The Catholics, who form the third class in Ireland, number about 3,150,000. 'These are the *Irish* properly so called, trained from their infancy in an hereditary hatred and abhorrence of the English name, which conveys to them no ideas but those of blood and pillage and persecution.' They have little landed property, but a large

[1] An enormous exaggeration.

share of the commerce of Ireland, and it was Catholic merchants and traders who chiefly composed the Catholic Committee. From his 'personal knowledge' Tone states that a great majority of the members of that committee were 'sincere republicans, warmly attached to the cause of France.' The bulk of the Catholics, however, are 'in the lowest degree of misery and want; hewers of wood and drawers of water. Bread they seldom taste; meat never, save once in the year; . . . their food all the whole year round is potatoes; their drink sometimes milk, more frequently water; . . . in addition to a heavy rent, they pay tithes to the priests of the Protestant religion, which they neither profess nor believe; their own priests fleece them.' These men are prepared for any change, for they feel that no change can make their situation worse. For five years they have looked up to France as the champion of the oppressed, and 'I will stake my head,' writes Tone, 'there are 500,000 men who would fly to the standard of the Republic, if they saw it once displayed in the cause of liberty and their country.' The whole Catholic peasantry of Ireland, above 3,000,000 of people, are to a man eager to throw off the English yoke.' The Defender organisation has already prepared the way; it includes the great body of the Catholic peasantry in Ulster, Leinster, and Connaught, and is spreading through Munster.

The advantages to France of the separation of Ireland from England appear obvious, and Tone especially and most emphatically insisted, that it would inevitably lead to the downfall of the naval ascendency of England. It would place her 'under insuperable difficulties in recruiting her army, and especially in equipping, victualling, and manning her navy, which, unless for the resources she drew from Ireland, she would be absolutely unable to do.' 'From the commencement of the

present war to the month of June 1795, not less than 200,000 men were raised in Ireland, of whom 80,000 were for the navy alone. It is a fact undeniable, though carefully concealed in England, that two-thirds of the British navy are manned by Irishmen.' If Lewis XIV. had made it a main object of French policy to separate Ireland from England, he would have for ever sapped that naval ascendency to which England owed her superiority in all succeeding wars.

The assertion that two-thirds of the so-called British seamen were Irishmen, was constantly made by Tone and by other United Irishmen, and it derives some support from a passage in one of the speeches of Grattan,[1] and from statements that were made on serious authority at a later period of the war.[2] Its improbability will at once strike the reader, who knows how small a proportion of the ships in the British navy sail from or ever touch at an Irish port; how miserably the fisheries, which are one of the chief natural resources of Ireland, have at all times been neglected, and how little taste or aptitude for maritime life the Irish people have dis-

[1] In his speech on the Catholic Bill in 1793, Grattan said: 'In the last war, of 80,000 seamen, 50,000 were Irish names; in Chelsea, near one-third of the pensioners were Irish names; in some of the men-of-war, almost the whole complement of men were Irish. . . . The Irish Catholics have supplied his Majesty's fleets and armies so abundantly, and in so great a proportion, that the recruiting service could not well go on without them.' (Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 46.)

[2] In the very interesting speech on the Catholic question by Sir J. Hippisley, published in 1810, the following passage occurs: 'Sir J. H. held in his hand a list of forty-six ships of the line, which at two different periods had belonged to the Plymouth division, and in the majority of which the Catholics greatly exceeded the Protestants; in some of the first and second rates amounting even to two-thirds; in one or two first-rates nearly the whole; and in the naval hospital, about four years since, of 470 sick, 303 were Catholics.' (Substance of the speech of Sir J. Hippisley, May 18, 1810, p. 53.)

played. The military annals of England are crowded with illustrious Irish names, and not a few may be found in those of France and Austria and Spain; but in the roll of distinguished sailors such names are conspicuously rare. Recruiting for the navy, however, in the eighteenth century was largely effected by the press gang or by poverty, and it is probable that the suspected persons who had been recently sent to the fleet from the disturbed districts had increased the proportion of Irish sailors. Tone himself justified his assertion on three grounds. 'First, I have myself heard several British officers, and among them some of very distinguished reputation, say so. Secondly, I know that when the Catholic delegates, whom I had the honour to attend, were at St. James's in January 1793, in the course of the discussion with Henry Dundas, Principal Secretary of State, they asserted the fact to be as I have mentioned, and Mr. Dundas admitted it, which he would most certainly not have done if he could have denied it; and lastly, on my voyage to America, our vessel was boarded by a British frigate, whose crew consisted of 220 men, of whom no less than 210 were Irish.'

The question is sufficiently curious and important to justify a short digression, and there is some evidence on the subject which is more precise and trustworthy than that which was within the knowledge of Tone. Pelham, being convinced of the great exaggeration of the language employed by Grattan, caused an exact return to be made 'of the number of men furnished by Ireland for general service, including army and navy, from the commencement of the war in 1793 to November 1, 1796.' It appeared to Pelham, and it appeared to the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York, to show that Ireland contributed comparatively little, and it certainly falls far short of the estimate of Tone, but the

impression it leaves on my own mind is rather the great military energy which Ireland at this time displayed. Its population in 1796 can hardly at the utmost have exceeded four millions and a half. Including the militia, but exclusive of the yeomanry, rather more than 30,000 men were required for the protection of the country; but over and above this number, Ireland furnished within the period that has been mentioned, 38,653 men for the service of the war. 11,457 of them were for the navy, and 4,058 for the marines.[1]

On the whole, Tone maintained that there could be no reasonable doubt that if France could succeed in landing a considerable force with a large quantity of arms for distribution, Ireland must be lost to England. Catholics and Dissenters, whose mutual animosities had been the radical weakness of the country, were now cordially united, and they constituted nine-tenths of the population. The whole body of the militia would probably go over to the invader, and in such a contest England could not fully rely either on her army or her navy. The French on landing should issue a proclamation disavowing all idea of conquest for themselves,

[1] See two valuable reports among the miscellaneous Irish papers in the *Pelham MSS.* The Duke of York, in acknowledging them, says: 'Many thanks for the papers concerning the number of men furnished by Ireland to Great Britain since the beginning of the war. They are exceedingly curious and interesting, and clearly prove what very little assistance, in proportion, Ireland has afforded.' (Duke of York to Pelham, Dec. 3, 1796.) Pelham says he found that 'the men who had enlisted were mechanics, and inhabitants of towns, and that the peasants could seldom be persuaded, under any circumstances, to quit their families and place of nativity. . . . I could hardly believe, until I made a minute inquiry, that even in the militia they were chiefly manufacturers and mechanics. To ascertain the fact, I called for a return from the regiments in garrison who happen to come from the different provinces of the kingdom, and I find that two-thirds or three-fourths of each regiment were of that description.' (Pelham to the Duke of York, Nov. 14, 1796.)

guaranteeing perfect religious freedom, and the abolition of all connection between Church and State, promising, on the one hand, protection to the persons and property of those who supported them, and, on the other, the confiscation of the property both of those who opposed them and of those who did not return to Ireland by a specified date,[1] and inviting the people to take arms and to organise a National Convention. All property belonging to Englishmen in Ireland should be immediately confiscated, and Tone dwelt especially upon the great sums which some Englishmen had invested in mortgages on Irish land.[2]

Such were the schemes, and such the hopes, of the ablest organiser of the United Irishmen. The representation of the state of Ireland which he laid before the French Government, was remarkably confirmed by the independent testimony of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and of Arthur O'Connor. Another memoir, apparently unconnected with them, came nearly at the same time from Ireland, asserting that fourteen counties in the North were already fully organised for revolution, that the organisation was rapidly advancing in the other counties, that the lower orders obeyed those who led them without knowing who they were, and that 17,000 out of the 20,000 militia were secretly sworn to go with the people.[3]

The French Ministers were now fully resolved to attempt the enterprise, but they determined in the first place to send to Ireland a trusted agent to study the situation, and to apprise the revolutionary organisations of their intention. The difficulty of finding such an agent proved very considerable. Tone himself was too

[1] This clause was apparently copied from the Jacobite Parliament of 1689.

[2] See these two memorials in Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 181–204.

[3] MSS., French Foreign Office. See, too, on this memorial, Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 137.

well known, and he strongly urged the French not to send a priest, and if possible to choose a military man.[1] A Count Richard O'Shea was at last selected, and he received very elaborate instructions. He was to find out the leaders of the Defenders; to take if necessary the Defender oath; to discover their numbers and their strength; and to ascertain whether they were really allied with the Presbyterians, or led by priests or great landlords. He was also, himself, as an agent of the French Government, to regulate and direct their organisation. A sketch was given of the different districts in Ulster which should be placed under separate commanders. Internal correspondence was to be carried on chiefly through the instrumentality of women and children, and on foot, but never through the Post Office, and it was to be made a special object to seduce Post Office officials in order to become acquainted with the Government correspondence, and to introduce Defenders as servants into the houses of men of position. No member of Parliament was to be admitted into the organisation, and rich proprietors should be in general excluded. O'Shea was authorised to promise that a force of at least 10,000 French soldiers, with arms for 20,000 men, would speedily arrive either in the North in the counties of Derry or Antrim, or else in the West on the coast of Galway. All partial insurrections in Ulster and Connaught, before the arrival of the French, must be avoided, but disturbances might be excited in Munster and Leinster, and especially in Dublin, so as to draw the British forces to the South and to the capital. The best men, however, must not be risked till the French arrived.[2]

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[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 45.

[2] Secret instructions to Citizen O'Shea. (F.F.O.) Accompanying these instructions there is a paper of comments in French, but evidently written by an Irishman. It states that religion had nothing to say to the Defender

Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor had by this time gone to Switzerland. At first De la Croix was suspicious of the former, and he expressed his fear lest the husband of Pamela should be an instrument in the hands of the Orleans faction and of Pitt. The assurances of Reinhard, which were strongly confirmed by Barthélemy, appear to have satisfied his mind, but he wrote that the proposed visit to Paris would be dangerous and impolitic, for it would certainly be discovered, and its object guessed by the spies of Pitt. De la Croix mentioned that he had laid the despatches of Reinhard before the Directory, and he now in their name made a proposal which Wolfe Tone had already rejected as impracticable. It was, that an insurrection in Ireland should precede a French expedition. The Directory, he said, authorised him to promise that, 'as soon as the insurrection had broken out,' the Irish should be seconded by 15,000 French soldiers with arms and munitions, and that if, as there seemed every reason to believe, the English were expelled from Ireland, France would exert all her power to secure their independence, and would leave them perfectly free to organise their Government as they pleased.[1]

This plan, however, was decisively rejected by the

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movement; that the priests had done all they could to suppress it, but that their influence (to the great regret of the partisans of the Government) was much diminished. The Catholic landlords and noblemen, the writer says, had no influence; their houses were plundered of arms just as much as the houses of Protestants; once the revolutionary movement was *en train*, the Presbyterians, by virtue of their superior intelligence, would necessarily take the lead, and royalty was out of the question in an independent Ireland. O'Shea appears to have started from Hamburg, and received instructions from Reinhard. Reinhard to De la Croix, 1 messidor, an iv (June 19, 1796). It is, I suppose, this mission which is alluded to in Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 224.

[1] De la Croix to Barthélemy, 4 messidor, an iv (June 22, 1796). (F.F.O.)

Irish delegates, and a powerful memorial, probably written by Arthur O'Connor, stated fully their reasons. It might, he admitted, at first sight appear reasonable, that in a country where the overwhelming majority of the population were disaffected, an insurrection should precede a foreign expedition, but it must be remembered, that the whole legislative and executive power in Ireland was in the hands of the Protestant aristocracy; that England would support them with all her strength; that the two Governments had been, for many months, fully aware that the Irish people were binding themselves by secret societies and oaths to establish a separate republic, and that they had been taking all the measures in their power to paralyse the scheme. By the Gunpowder Act, the people were prevented from obtaining gunpowder, or transporting arms from place to place. By the Insurrection Act, they were obliged to register all arms in their possession. By the same Act, any four magistrates might seize suspected persons and send them to the fleet. Six magistrates might declare a county in a state of insurrection, and then the Government might do what it pleased, make domiciliary searches, seize all who were out of their houses between 8 P.M. and 4 A.M., and take possession of all arms whether registered or not. The great majority of the militia, it is true, were in the interest of the revolution, but they were scattered; they had no munitions, and all their officers belonged to the anti-revolutionary aristocracy. Under such circumstances, the arrival of a French force must precede the insurrection. The Directory fear the superiority of the English fleet, but they should remember that half its sailors are Irish, and it is hoped that by their means a part of it may be seized. On two points, said O'Connor, the Irish leaders are inexorably resolved. The first is, that they will undertake nothing till the whole scheme of the alliance

has been fully arranged. The second is, that the arrival of French aid must be the signal of the insurrection. If the Directory refuse to agree to these points, the Irish will wait till the probable wreck of English finance, or till the moment of peace relaxing the vigilance of the Government, makes it possible for them to supply themselves with arms and ammunition. Oral communication with the French Ministers, O'Connor thought of the highest importance. Fitzgerald was well known in Paris, and it might therefore be wise that he should not go there, but O'Connor was a complete stranger in the French capital, and if the Directory would receive him, he promised not to leave his rooms except at night. He would await their reply in Switzerland.[1]

By this time, however, the preparations for the expedition were nearly ready. The command was entrusted to Hoche, one of the most brilliant and chivalrous of the young generals of France. The recent pacification of La Vendée had given him a reputation which was only surpassed by that which Buonaparte was now gaining in Italy, and he adopted the Irish project with a passionate eagerness. O'Connor did not go to Paris, but he appears to have had an interview with Hoche, near the French frontier.[2] It was hoped that the expedition would be able to sail, by September 1, from Brest,[3] but many delays and disappointments, which it is not here necessary to recount,[4]

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[1] F.F.O.

[2] *Report* of the Secret Committee in 1798, p. 13. It appears to have been at Basle. (See Guillon, p. 171.)

[3] *Le Général de Grouchy et l'Irlande*, p. 43.

[4] The Marquis de Grouchy has shown, that Hoche himself was so disgusted with the inefficiency and delay of the naval department, that he wrote a letter on December 8, recommending the abandonment of the enterprise; and the Directory at last resolved to act upon his advice; but their letter, ordering that abandonment, only arrived at Brest after the fleet had sailed. (Ibid. pp. 65, 66.) See, too, on the details

retarded it till midwinter. Shortly before it started, Tone learnt, with much consternation, that John Keogh, Russell, Neilson, and some others of the United Irishmen, on whose co-operation he had counted, had been arrested for high treason, but there were other rumours, which seemed to confirm his most sanguine hopes. It was reported that, in the North, an explosion was daily expected, that a powder magazine at Belfast had been broken open, that 15,000 arms had just been smuggled successfully into Ireland, that an insurrection had actually broken out, that the arsenal of Dublin had been seized. Tone was commissioned to offer liberty to the prisoners of war, who were imprisoned near Brest, if they would serve on board the French fleet; and while all the Scotch, and nearly all the English, refused, the offer was accepted by fifty out of the sixty Irish. If they were a fair sample of the Irish sailors in the British navy, there was much to be hoped from disaffection in the fleet; but Tone evidently did not count upon it, and he expressed his private belief, in his journal, that if a superior, or even an equal, English fleet encountered the French, the latter would infallibly be beaten.

In order to lessen the danger of an encounter by sea, the project of an invasion of Ulster was abandoned, but it was hoped that a sufficient force had been collected to make an invasion of Munster decisive.

One of the most remarkable facts in the history of this expedition, is the almost entire absence of those naturalised Irishmen, who had so long and so bravely fought under the French standard. Great numbers of the very flower of the Irish race had, during the past century, taken refuge in France, and the three regiments of Dillon, Berwick, and Walsh, which had been formed

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of this expedition, the work of M. Guillon, *La France et l'Irlande pendant la Révolution.*

in 1689 out of the Jacobite refugees, and replenished by the many Irish Catholics who fled from Ireland during the penal laws, continued to the eve of the Revolution. No regiments in the French army had, for a hundred years, a higher record of honourable service; but since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, their character had gradually changed. The severe law passed by the Irish Parliament against those who enlisted under the French flag, coupled with the abolition of the penal laws against the Catholics, and with the great increase of industrial prosperity in Ireland, had checked the tide of emigration to France, and the Irish element among the soldiers had been reduced to small proportions. The officers, however, were still Irish, or of Irish origin, and, to a large extent, representatives of distinguished Catholic families.[1] There was a time

[1] See O'Callaghan's *Hist. of the Irish Brigade*, pp. 479, 503, 630. Mr. O'Callaghan attributes more influence than I should do, to the decline of the Stuart cause, in accounting for the diminution of the Irish element in these regiments. Grattan said, in 1793, that the Irish brigade was 'chiefly composed of Dutch, and of the recruits of various nations, of very few Irish,' and that even the officers, though of Irish families, were not generally of Irish birth. (Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 45, 46.) In a debate on the new military organisation in the French National Assembly it was stated that the Irish regiments had altogether ceased to be really Irish, but this was strenuously contradicted by General Arthur Dillon, one of their most distinguished commanders. He published in 1792 *Some Historical Notes on the Services of the Irish Officers*, in which he says, that although, after the penal legislation of the Irish Parliament against emigration, 'the Irish regiments could not obtain any other soldiers than those who came at all risks in numbers to join them,' yet 'the emigration of the officers was never interrupted. It subsists still so actively that the number of Catholic Irishmen born in Ireland of Irish parents exceeds at this moment the number of places vacant, and there are in the Irish regiments no other officers born in France except the sons and descendants of former officers of the regiments who are married in this country.' He adds that in bygone wars many Irish had deserted from the English service to join the Irish regiments, and that in the

when such men would have borne a foremost part in a French expedition for emancipating Ireland from English rule. But the same desperate fidelity with which their fathers had sacrificed home, and country, and fortune, for their faith and for their king, still continued, and the children of the exiles of 1689 were now, themselves, enduring, for the same cause, proscription, confiscation, and exile. With few exceptions, they ranged themselves against the Revolution.[1] Many had gathered round the Prince de Condé, in the first stage of the struggle,[2] others capitulated to Commodore Ford at St. Domingo, and soon, by a strange and most pathetic turn, the exiled descendants of the Irish Jacobites found a refuge under the British flag. In September 1794, the Duke of Portland invited the Duke of Fitzjames into the English service, 'with the regiment of the Marshal de Berwick, and with the Irish brigade, on the same footing as it had been in the service of his Christian Majesty,' and he stated, that it was the intention of the King to add a fourth regiment to the Irish brigade, and to place it under the command of O'Connell—one of the most distinguished officers in the old French army.[3] The offer was gladly accepted, and soon after, some of the officers came to Ireland to recruit.

They found it seething with disaffection and revolutionary ideas. Grattan, it is true, spoke with entire approbation of the enlistment, though he expressed his

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American war 'more than 350 Irish Catholics taken prisoners at Saint Eustache enlisted in the Dillon and Walsh regiments, in which the greater part of them still remain.' See the translation of this memoir published by Duffy, p. 76.

[1] Among these few, the most distinguished was General Clarke, who had served for two years in Berwick's regiment. (Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 70.)

[2] See *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, v. 532; O'Callaghan, p. 633.

[3] He was an uncle of Daniel O'Connell. His Life was published in 1891 by Mrs. M. O'Connell.

wonder that the Government should think that the presence of twenty or thirty Irish Catholic gentlemen in the Irish Parliament endangered the throne, while they were prepared to arm a brigade of 6,000 Catholics, under Catholic and French officers.[1] But Grattan's influence was now, for a time, eclipsed. The United Irishmen did all in their power to discredit them, and the Catholic Committee, which was pervaded by the same spirit, utterly repudiated them. The representatives of the old Catholic gentry of Ireland found themselves strangers and aliens among their people, and were exposed to gross insults, which Tone afterwards related, to the keen delight of his French friends.[2] Nor were they well treated by the English Government. It was determined to raise the Irish regiments to six, but it was soon found that recruits did not come in in sufficient numbers to fill them ; and an order was given that the regiments which were numerically weakest should be drafted into those that were strongest, and the superfluous officers reduced to half-pay. The regiment of Berwick was one of those which it was proposed to abolish in favour of a new regiment, and Fitzjames complained bitterly that the compact was violated, under which he and his brother officers had enlisted in the English service.[3] Many of the officers were reduced

[1] Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 254, 255.

[2] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 70, 71.

[3] See, in the *Pelham MSS.*, the very interesting memorial of the Duke of Fitzjames, Sept. 1796, and a letter of Pelham to Colonel Brownrigg, May 11, 1797. In an earlier letter, Pelham writes: 'I have never troubled you about the Irish brigade, but it is really a most shocking and disgraceful thing. I have been obliged to advance 1,500*l.* upon my own credit for the bare subsistence of the officers, who otherwise would have starved, and I very much fear that the opportunity of recruiting is lost, unless some of the rioters in Roscommon should be induced to enlist, to save themselves.' (Pelham to Windham, May 17, 1795.) Something was said in the Irish House of Lords, by Lord Blayney, about the French emigrant offi-

to the most abject poverty; the new regiments served in the West Indies, in North America and in Egypt, but the brigade was not kept up as a separate body, and it was not reconstructed when the Bourbons regained their throne.[1]

It was on December 15, 1796, that the French expedition at last set sail from Brest. It consisted of seventeen ships of the line, thirteen frigates, and a number of corvettes and transports, making in all forty-three sail, and carrying about 15,000 soldiers, as well as a large supply of arms and ammunition for distribution. Admiral Morard De Galles commanded the fleet, and Hoche the troops. Wolfe Tone, who was now known as Adjutant-General Smith, was on board the 'Indomptable,' which also carried Chérin, the chief of the staff.

As far as the English were concerned, the French had every reason to congratulate themselves, for the bulk of the fleet never appear to have seen an English sail during the expedition; but the profound scepticism which Tone frequently expressed of the capacities of the French sailors, was amply justified by the event. The weather when the fleet set sail was enchanting; the sun was bright as May, and the wind soft and favourable, but some of the vessels speedily came into collision. The 'Séduisant,' a ship of the line carrying seventy-

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cers, which the Duke of Fitzjames considered an insult, and a duel took place in the Phœnix Park, in which the Duke was slightly wounded. (*Annual Register*, 1797, pp. 9, 10.)

[1] An 'Irish legion' had been formed by Napoleon in 1804. It continued in the French service till 1814, and served with distinction in many campaigns; but it was mainly formed of revolutionary elements, and was quite different in its spirit and character from the old Irish brigade. Mr. O'Callaghan states (I know not on what authority), that Lord Castlereagh exerted his influence at the time of the Bourbon restoration, to prevent the reconstruction of the old Irish brigade. (*Hist. of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France*, p. 634.)

four guns, when endeavouring to thread the dangerous passage called the Raz, ran upon a rock, and sank with almost all the soldiers who were on board her; other ships missed their way, and on the 17th there were but eighteen sail together, the general and the admiral in command being among the absent. Admiral Bouvet, and General Grouchy who was second to Hoche in the command, were still there. On the 18th there was a dense fog, followed on the 19th by a complete calm. Bouvet opened his instructions in case of separation, and found that they ordered him to cruise for five days off Mizen Head, and at the end of that time to proceed to the mouth of the Shannon, to remain there for three days, and if the fleet did not appear, to return to Brest. As Tone strongly urged, it would be almost a miracle if under such circumstances the English did not attack them, and he hoped that there was still a sufficient force to effect a landing. Some of the missing vessels reappeared, but the 'Fraternité,' which carried Hoche, Morard De Galles, and the whole treasury intended for the expedition, was not among them, and it was not seen again till the fleet returned to France. On the 19th the wind became unfavourable, though the weather was still moderate, and that night there was a new separation, but on the 21st there were once more thirty-five sail in company, only seven or eight, including the 'Fraternité,' being absent. On this day the French saw Mizen Head, which they at first took for Cape Clear. They coasted it with a favourable wind and a smooth sea, sailing at one time so close to land, that it was possible to throw a biscuit on shore; they then stood out to sea, directing their course to Bantry Bay, and on the evening of the 22nd, fifteen vessels, containing between six and seven thousand soldiers, cast anchor off Beer Island, which lies just within its mouth, and about four leagues from the point where the landing

was intended. Nineteen or twenty ships lagged behind, and failed to enter the bay, but they were still within sight of the ships that were anchored within.

So far most things had gone favourably for the French, but Tone's experience of the manner in which the expedition was conducted, filled him with apprehension. 'It is scandalous,' he wrote in his journal, 'to part company twice in four days, in such moderate weather as we have had; but sea affairs, I see, are not our forte.' 'I believe this is the first instance of an admiral in a clean frigate, with moderate weather and moonlight nights, parting company with his fleet.' 'All now rests upon Grouchy.' 'I do not at all like the countenance of the Etat-Major in this crisis. When they speak of the expedition, it is in a style of despondency. . . . I see nothing of that spirit of enterprise, combined with strong resolution, which our present situation demands.'[1]

It was on the night of the 22nd that Dalrymple, who commanded the English force at Cork, first learnt the danger that was impending. The news came from several independent quarters. His Majesty's sloop 'Kangaroo,' commanded by the Hon. Captain Boyle, had been driven by stress of weather into Bantry Bay, had left it on the 20th, and had soon after sighted a French fleet, which the captain believed to consist of from nineteen to twenty-two sail. He at once sent Mr. Talbot, his second lieutenant, by land from Crookhaven with the news, and himself set all sail and hastened to England to inform the Admiralty. The news had but just arrived, when Dalrymple received a despatch from Richard White, the chief resident proprietor near Bantry, containing an affidavit sworn by three sailors at Beerhaven, and also a letter written by one of them to a relative at Bantry. They stated that on Wednesday,

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 255–257.

the 21st, they had seen a fleet between the Dorsays and the Mizen, which they supposed to be English; that a party of them had sailed in a hooker to meet it, but, not liking its appearance, had endeavoured to return to shore, when they were brought to by a cannon shot, and compelled to go on board what proved to be a French man-of-war. Five of the crew were kept on board, and the others detained till nightfall. The French treated them with much civility, and told them the fleet was bound for Bantry, and that it carried 80,000 men. The writer expressed his own belief, that there could not have been half so many. The same night a second courier arrived from Mr. White, with the information of the custom-house officer at Beerhaven, reporting the appearance of a French fleet with many soldiers on board, making for Bantry. Some French sailors, it appears, had gone ashore, and had been detained and examined by a magistrate, and they stated that they had come direct from France, and that it was believed on board that a portion of the fleet had gone to the North of Ireland. An officer was at once sent by Dalrymple to Bantry, and he met Mrs. White upon the road, and learnt from her that twenty-five French ships were beating to windward in Bantry Bay.[1]

There could be no doubt of the imminence of the danger, but it was completely uncertain what force the French had brought, and whether the expedition to Bantry Bay was isolated, or part of a concerted scheme directed simultaneously to different parts of the island. Every possible measure of defence appears at once to have been taken. The cattle were driven inland, lest they should fall into the hands of the French. Immediate orders were given to concentrate troops, and to make

[1] Hon. Captain Boyle to Admiral Kingsmill, Dec. 21; Dalrymple to Pelham, Dec. 22, 23, 26, 1796. (*Pelham MSS.*)

use of every means to retard the advance of the enemy. Mr. White at once called together the yeomanry under his command, organised his tenantry, made arrangements for establishing outposts upon the mountains, and took great pains to obtain and transmit information and to make preparations for the English. The promptitude, energy, and intelligence which he displayed, were repeatedly and warmly recognised by Dalrymple, and they were soon afterwards rewarded by his elevation to the peerage with the title of Lord Bantry. 'I will stand,' he wrote on the 24th, 'with my faithful fellows to the last, certain of your support. All ranks here nobly support me. They [the French] cannot land for some hours—the wind is against them.'

Two gentlemen near Bantry, of the name of McCarthy, undertook to supply the expected English force with potatoes, and the best spirit was shown by the surrounding peasantry. But the letters of Dalrymple plainly show how almost desperate the situation would have been if 14,000 or 15,000 good French soldiers had at once landed. 'Our numbers,' he wrote, 'will probably fall so short of those of the enemy, that a diversion is all to be expected. Some artillery are now at Bandon, as well as tents; . . . we will have at or near Bandon towards 2,000 men in some days, if the prospect of affairs does not clear.' With every effort to concentrate the troops, it would be impossible to collect more than 8,000 men near Cork before the enemy had reached it. 'His light troops, at least, may be expected to reach it in four days from the landing of the main body at Bantry. Whatever can be done by pickaxe and spade upon the three approaches from Bantry, may occasion a further delay of two days, if artillery accompanies the march. In eight days, supposing Cork to be abandoned, by falling back towards the Blackwater with the troops previously advanced, 12,000 infantry may be formed in

a strong position near Kilworth and Fermoy, besides a considerable corps of cavalry and artillery.' [1]

It was not the first time that French ships of war had appeared in Bantry Bay. In 1689, Château Renaud had sailed into it with a powerful fleet, had succeeded in landing the money and munitions of war that were necessary for the French army, and had returned triumphantly to Brest, in spite of the opposition of an English fleet. On that occasion, however, the French were favoured both by good seamanship and by propitious winds. Both of these conditions were now wanting, and an obstacle more powerful than any that Dalrymple could oppose to them, baffled their designs.

On the night of the 22nd a strong easterly gale arose, accompanied with snow. It blew directly from the shore, and not only prevented a landing, but threw the whole expedition into confusion. For the fourth time, the fleet was separated. The twenty ships which lay outside the bay, drifting fiercely before the storm, were soon lost to sight, while the remainder tossed in wild confusion and no small danger in the bay. An English fleet, flying before the favouring gale, might appear at any moment, but Tone observed with much bitterness that the French did not even take the common precaution of stationing a frigate at the harbour mouth to give warning. If the enterprise was to be pursued, it must be done with the fifteen or seventeen ships that were stationed near Beer Island, and the responsibility of deciding rested with Grouchy and Bouvet, who commanded respectively the land and sea forces. Grouchy—who was now fully supported by the Etat-Major—was

[1] White to General Coote, Dec. 24; Dalrymple to Pelham, Dec. 23, 24; Captain Cotter to Dalrymple, Dec. 25, 1796. See, too, the account, derived from many different sources, of the measures taken, and the spirit displayed, in Crofton Croker's admirable history of the Bantry Bay expedition, in his *Popular Songs illustrative of the French Invasions of Ireland*, part iii.

strongly in favour of attempting to land, even with the greatly diminished force. He assumed the full responsibility of the step by sending a formal order to Bouvet, and on the 24th he wrote a despatch intended for the Directory, inclosing this order, and stating very clearly the motives that governed him, and the difficulties of his position. He had now only between 6,000 and 7,000 men at his disposal, a force which was less than half of that which had been sent from Brest. In the absence of Hoche, he knew nothing of the military plans which had been adopted in France; nothing of the information which had been so laboriously collected; nothing of the nature and extent of the relations that had been established with discontented Irishmen. Under such circumstances, and after a delay which had given the English time to mass their forces, the landing of so small an army in an unknown country was very perilous, but Grouchy considered it preferable to the alternative of abandoning the enterprise, when they had almost touched the Irish coast, and he believed that he could at least effect a diversion that would be useful to the Republic. Tone described vividly the desperate character of the attempt. The French had not a guinea, not a tent, not a horse to draw the four cannon which were their sole artillery. Their general intended to march on foot. They proposed to leave their baggage behind them, and with nothing but their arms, and the clothes on their backs, to sally forth to encounter an unknown enemy. But the near prospect of adventure filled them with delight, and Tone had never so much admired the invincible buoyancy of the French character as in that hour of peril. They hoped to obtain provisions and means of transport at Bantry; to reach Kinsale and Cork by forced marches, and to receive the support of an armed population.

The anchors were drawn up on the afternoon of the

24th, and the fleet stood for the land. It was at first intended to disembark at Beerhaven, but the Irish sailors, who had been taken on board, pronounced the road thence to Bantry to be impossible for artillery, and it was in consequence resolved to sail to Bantry itself. An hour and a half of good wind would, in the opinion of Tone, have carried them there; but the wind was in their teeth, and in three or four hours they seemed hardly to have gained a hundred yards. In the evening the wind slightly abated, but in the night it rose again into a furious storm, and the waves soon ran so high that no small boat could live.

There could hardly have been a more melancholy Christmas, than that which now dawned upon an expedition which had been so lately flushed with the assurance of success. The hurricane showed no sign of abatement, and its fury was such that the whole squadron was in imminent danger of being dashed in pieces on the rocks. For at least another day a landing was utterly impossible; if it was at length effected, the French had great reason to fear that an English force would by this time have been assembled which would be amply sufficient to annihilate their little army, while a powerful English fleet might at any moment appear at the mouth of the bay. The wind, which was so unfavourable to the French, would have assisted it, and had it arrived, the French would have been caught as in a trap, and not a ship could have escaped. Tone discussed the situation with General Chérin and the rest of the Etat-Major, and acknowledged that it was now all but desperate; but he urged that it was still possible to fly before the gale from Bantry Bay to the mouth of the Shannon, and there to land the troops and march to Limerick, which would probably be undefended, as the garrison would have hastened to Bantry Bay. The proposition was favourably received, but the general

and admiral were nearly two leagues away. The storm made all communication or consultation impossible, and the whole day passed in painful suspense. At half-past six, when the dark and stormy winter evening had well closed in, to the extreme astonishment of the Etat-Major, the frigate carrying Bouvet and Grouchy ran swiftly before the wind alongside of the 'Indomptable,' and a voice from on board it, hailed the captain through a speaking trumpet, and ordered him at once to cut his cable and put to sea. No signal of any kind had been seen or heard preparing them for the step, and the first impression was that the ship, which had disappeared so rapidly through the gloom, was an English frigate, which had been concealed in the bay, had availed itself of the storm and darkness to escape, and had adopted this stratagem to separate the fleet. After a hasty consultation, it was resolved at least to wait till the day, and the vessel bearing the admiral and the general was soon alone in the open sea.

This proceeding, which afterwards gave rise to much angry recrimination, was due to Bouvet, and it is easy to explain, if not to justify, it. He was not on cordial terms with Grouchy, and although he had reluctantly acquiesced in the order to disembark the troops, the storm of the 25th had convinced him that the enterprise was now impracticable. In the afternoon one of the cables of his frigate had broken, through the strain, and the ship was for a time in extreme danger. The hour of sunset came, and the storm, instead of diminishing, as had been hoped, rather increased. Bouvet considered that he was responsible for the fleet, and that, even apart from the danger of its being captured by the English, it was not likely, if it remained in a narrow and rock-bound bay, to outlive the night. He therefore resolved at all hazards to gain the open sea, and endeavour to bring his squadron to Brest. Without even

informing Grouchy of his intention, he ordered two cannon to be fired as a signal for departure to the fleet; but amid the howling of the tempest, the signal appears to have been unheard in the 'Indomptable,' and no other ship left the bay.

Grouchy angrily but vainly protested, and when the morning broke, and it was found that their vessel was alone on the sea, he vehemently urged Bouvet to return to Bantry Bay to seek the fleet, or else to make for the mouth of the Shannon, where, in obedience to the instructions that had been issued, some of the missing vessels were likely to be found. The first suggestion appeared impracticable, for no vessel could have sailed in the teeth of such a hurricane as was blowing; and Bouvet rejected the second, refusing to run any further unnecessary risk, and alleging that the missing ships, if they had not sunk or been captured, had probably by this time made their way to France. On January 1, 1797, the frigate carrying the admiral and the general, who were now at deadly enmity, arrived safely but alone at Brest.

Contrary to expectation, the ships that remained in Bantry Bay rode out the night, but the next day the gale still continued, and an additional horror was added to the situation by a fog, which was so dense that it was for some time impossible to see more than a ship's length ahead. Several of the ships, including the 'Indomptable,' repeatedly dragged their anchors, and were in the utmost danger. In the afternoon one of the largest could hold out no longer, and sought the only possible safety by putting to sea. At night three others were compelled to take the same course, and on the 27th the remainder of the squadron, availing themselves of a slight improvement in the wind, left Bantry Bay. They sailed through a furious sea towards the mouth of the Shannon, but as none of the missing ships were in

sight, they speedily turned their helms towards France, and succeeded in reaching Brest soon after Bouvet and Grouchy.

The danger, which had been so threatening, had passed, but many days elapsed before the English general felt any security. On the 25th, Captain Cotter, who had been sent down to Bantry to reconnoitre, wrote describing the storm, and informed the commander with evident perplexity that not more than seventeen vessels were in sight. As the fleet had been originally reckoned at fifty or sixty sail, he inferred that only a portion was in the bay, and that it was either awaiting a powerful reinforcement, or playing a secondary part to an expedition the nature and object of which were not yet known. 'Whatever troops,' he added, 'may be on board this fleet of seventeen vessels, I presume could never be expected to make much impression on this country, unless they rely upon powerful assistance from the inhabitants, which I am happy to say, for the honour of this part of Ireland, they have not the most distant chance of obtaining.' Dalrymple on the following day wrote to Pelham, that unless the English fleet speedily came and conquered, he had little doubt that on the first fair day the French fleet would be brought together and a landing effected; and although the French would now find many difficulties in their way, he feared there were none which a considerable body of good troops could not surmount. The French fleet disappeared, but on December 30, four large French ships and one or two smaller ones were again seen making for the bay. They entered it, cast anchor, sent out a boat to a small island belonging to Mr. White, and took away some sailors. Next day a second boat was seen to leave one of the ships, and the little garrison which was now posted at Bantry was drawn out on the shore to oppose a landing, but it was not attempted, and in the course

of the day all the sailors who had been taken were released except one, who was kept as a pilot. They were examined by an English officer, and they reported that they had been on board two ships, neither of which contained any soldiers, and had been told that these ships had never before been in the bay, and that they would leave it on the first fair day unless the vanguard of the fleet appeared. The officer greatly doubted whether the sailors told the truth, and on the first day of 1797 two more French ships appeared. 'Their size,' wrote Dalrymple, 'I know not; they drop in gradually, and if they sail not to-day, the wind being fair, they certainly mean to remain in the bay, and form a junction with those absent.' It is probable that these vessels were some of those which had formerly failed to enter the bay, and had been driven from its mouth by the storm on the night of December 22. On the 2nd they sailed farther out, and cast anchor off Beer Island near the mouth of the bay, where they were shrouded from view by a thick mist. On the 3rd or 4th they set sail for France.[1]

In the first week of January, most of the ships, which had been so widely and so strangely scattered, had returned to Brest, but the French had some considerable losses to deplore. One transport and one ship of war had been taken by the English, and six other vessels perished in the course of the expedition either from striking against rocks, or from the violence of the waves, or through isolated encounters with English ships. The last ship to return to France was the 'Fraternité,' carrying Hoche and the admiral of the

[1] Cotter to Dalrymple, Dec. 25; Dalrymple to Pelham, Dec. 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, Jan. 1, 2, 3, 6, 1797; Col. French to General Coote, Dec. 31, 1796; Jan. 2, 1797; John Brown to Dalrymple, Jan. 3, 1797. (*Pelham MSS.*) See, too, Croker's *Narrative*, pp. 27–29.

fleet. It had parted from the remainder of the fleet shortly after leaving Brest, and it soon after was descried by a much more powerful English frigate, which chased it for more than twelve hours, far from its intended course. When it endeavoured to regain it, it encountered the great storms of the 27th and 29th, which partially disabled it, and drove it far from the Irish coast. After much hardship and some adventures, which it is not here necessary to relate, the admiral at last succeeded, on January 14, in bringing his shattered frigate to Rochelle.[1]

It is not surprising that men who seek to trace in human history the operations of a Divine hand, should have deemed the storm which dispersed the French fleet, when it lay within a cannon shot of the Irish shore, as manifestly providential as that which two cen-

[1] Wolfe Tone's *Journal* gives an admirably graphic and, on the whole, an accurate account of this expedition; but Tone naturally saw only what took place in the neighbourhood of the vessel in which he sailed. He was not always acquainted with the designs and motives of the commanders, and there are a few slight errors in his narrative. I have compared it carefully with the valuable series of documents published by the Marquis de Grouchy, which include the journals of Grouchy and Chérin, the official despatches and some of the private letters of Grouchy, the reports of the generals of the different divisions of the expedition, and several other documents of great value. The marquis has conclusively disproved the charge which had been brought against his father, of having caused the abandonment of the expedition, and shown a want of zeal or energy in his command; and the journal of Tone fully supports his view. If any charge, indeed, can be truly brought against Grouchy, it is much more that of rashness than of timidity. The Directory censured the conduct of Bouvet, and M. Guillon adopts their view; but in the extremely difficult circumstances in which Bouvet was placed, it appears to me far from clear that the course which he adopted was not the wisest. The proceedings on land may be best traced in the many letters in the *Pelham MSS.*, and in the various notices brought together in the excellent narrative of Croker. (*Popular Songs illustrative of the French Invasions of Ireland*, part iii.)

turies before had shattered the proud Armada of Spain. Except perhaps in the beginning of the rebellion of 1641, the connection between England and Ireland had never been in such peril as in the last weeks of 1796. If the expedition had started but a few days earlier, when the weather was still propitious; if it had not encountered a storm of extraordinary violence and duration, at a time when success had almost been attained; if the wind had blown from any other point of the compass, or if the naval part of the expedition had been conducted with common skill, it is certain that an army of some fifteen thousand French soldiers would have been landed without difficulty within forty-five miles of Cork before there was any considerable force to oppose them, and it is scarcely less certain that the second city in Ireland must have fallen into their hands. It is only too probable, that such a success would have been immediately followed by a rebellion in Ulster, if not in the other provinces.

It was a strange and startling thing, that a great French fleet should have been able to sail unmolested to the coast of Ireland, to remain in an Irish bay for five whole days, and then to return to France without encountering an English fleet. In one respect, however, the expedition was very reassuring. It furnished a most valuable, if not decisive, test of the disposition of the Catholics in the South of Ireland, and some test of the disposition of those in the other parts of the kingdom, and their conduct appears to me to show clearly that, although treason had of late years been zealously propagated among them, its influence was as yet very superficial. An invasion had long been expected. Rumours of a coming French army, which was to emancipate the people from tithes and rents, and English rule, had been industriously spread through the Catholic population, and as soon as the fleet appeared in

Bantry Bay, the gravity of the crisis was fully understood. If disloyalty had really reached the point which the United Irish leaders imagined, and which some subsequent historians have supposed, it could scarcely have failed under such circumstances to have risen to the surface, and an immediate explosion might have been expected. But all the evidence we possess concurs in showing, that the great body of the Catholics did not at this time show the smallest wish to throw off the English rule, and that their spontaneous and unforced sympathies were with the British flag.

'The people,' wrote Dalrymple from Bandon when the arrival of the French had become known, 'behave most charmingly, and are, I am sure, faithful to their King, and do not aid his enemies.'[1] 'I must,' he wrote a few days later, 'in justice to the inhabitants of the country we have passed through, assure you that their good will, zeal, and activity exceed all description.'[2] 'The conduct of the people of this country is most meritorious and praiseworthy.'[3] General Smith wrote from Limerick: 'The country is reported to me to be infinitely more attached to Government, than common report ever allowed of. Your yeomanry are guardians, and infuse, by their appearance and indefatigable activity and exertions, the most loyal spirit throughout each barony. The cabins of every town are reported to me to be boiling their potatoes for the soldiers.'[4] Camden, in the middle of the crisis, was able to congratulate Portland on 'the zeal which has been manifested throughout the country in the raising of yeomanry corps, and the temper of those parts of the kingdom which have been made acquainted with the probability of a descent;' and he adds: 'Lord Shannon informs

[1] Dalrymple to Pelham, Dec. 24, 1796.
[2] Ibid. Dec. 27.
[3] Ibid. Dec. 28.
[4] General Smith to Pelham, Dec. 30, 1796.

me, that it is impossible to conceive more loyalty than appears in his part of the county of Cork. The situation and temper of this town is so important, that it must give your grace satisfaction to be informed of the very general loyalty and spirit which has appeared.'[1]

Dr. Moylan, the Catholic Bishop of Cork, at once issued a useful and very loyal address. Lord Kenmare exerted his great influence in Kerry in favour of the Government, and the chief bankers and traders, both of Cork and Limerick, came forward with offers of money.[2] Lord Donoughmore wrote from Cork that his brother, General Hutchinson, had just been to Galway. The merchants there immediately subscribed 900*l.* which was wanting for military purposes. 'The whole of the yeomanry corps offered to march with him anywhere, even without arms, which they were satisfied with the hope of receiving on their march at Limerick, and he is persuaded that, in the course of two or three days, he would have had it in his power to have marched a thousand men from Galway. All ranks of people were equally zealous and well affected, and, he said, I could not speak too highly to you of the loyalty of all that part of the kingdom. . . . Of the spirit, zeal, and loyalty of the people of this city [Cork] of every description, it is not possible by any words to convey too strong an impression.'[3] From the wilds of Mayo, Denis Browne sent a very similar account. 'This county,' he wrote, 'is perfectly quiet, and the disposition loyal even beyond my expectation. The inhabitants of this part of Mayo have connected the French and the Presbyterians of the North, who, they hear, have invited the French over; consequently they have transferred a *portion* of their hatred to the enemy, who, they are persuaded, are

[1] Camden to Portland, Dec. 26.
[2] Ibid. Jan. 10, 1797; General Smith to Pelham, Dec. 30, 1796.
[3] Lord Donoughmore (Cork), Dec. 29, 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

coming with their northern allies to drive them from their habitations and properties; and so strongly does this operate, that I am persuaded they would beat the French out of this country with stones. The unfortunate emigrant Northerners are acting quietly and inoffensively.'[1]

It is a memorable fact that Cork, Galway, and Limerick, the great centres of Irish Catholicism, the cities where at the present time the spirit of sedition is probably most formidable, vied with one another in 1796 in proofs of loyalty to the English Government when a French fleet was on the coast. It is a not less memorable fact, that the town which then showed the worst spirit was undoubtedly Belfast, the capital of the most advanced Irish Protestantism, and in the present day one of the most loyal cities of Ireland. Camden described it as the only town where bad dispositions had been shown.[2] A meeting of the principal inhabitants was convened for the purpose of raising a corps for defence against the French, but the only result was the appointment of a committee, which, by a majority of seven to two, passed strong resolutions in favour of parliamentary reform; and Brown, the Sovereign of Belfast, wrote, that in this moment of danger there was extreme difficulty in enlisting any yeomen, and that the disaffection was grave and general.'[3]

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[1] Denis Browne, Westport, Dec. 30, 1796. (I.S.P.O.)

[2] Camden to Portland, Dec. 30.

[3] G. Brown to Pelham, Dec. 28, 1796; Jan. 2, 1797; *Historical Collections relating to the Town of Belfast*, pp. 450-457. Beresford, in two private letters to Lord Auckland, Dec. 27, 29, 1796, fully corroborates the statements in the text. He says: 'All our accounts bring the most pleasing intelligence of a most universal zeal and ardour; the yeomen are anxious to move against the enemy; they are doing garrison duty everywhere. The farmers of Munster are assisting the military as much as they can.' 'Everything is quiet, and loyalty apparent everywhere, except in the North.' (*Beresford Corre-*

'I am not without expectation,' wrote Camden on January 3, 'that a partial landing will be made in order to feel the pulse of the North of Ireland, which I am convinced is ripe for revolt.' On the whole, however, looking back on the anxious period that had passed, he was able to congratulate the English Government very sincerely on the attitude of Ireland. 'Notwithstanding the suspicions I entertain,' he wrote, 'of the North, and notwithstanding the attempts of the disaffected here, I may, without being too sanguine, assure your grace of the loyalty and spirit of the rest of the kingdom. The towns of Limerick and Galway have vied with each other in expressions of loyalty and attachment, and in actions corresponding with these sentiments. The utmost hospitality has been shown by all descriptions of persons to the troops, and the peasants of the counties of Cork and Limerick have anticipated their wants by preparing potatoes for them on the road.'[1]

A few days later, he wrote that 'the best spirit' had been manifested both by the regulars and the militia; and he added: 'I have every reason to believe that if a landing had taken place, the latter would have displayed the utmost fidelity.' The Antrim and Down regiments, which had been suspected, seemed unanimously loyal, and the population, wherever the troops passed, showed the best dispositions. 'The roads, which in parts had been rendered impassable by the snow, were cleared by the peasantry. The poor people often shared their potatoes with them [the troops], and dressed their meat without demanding payment, of which there was a very particular instance in the town of Banagher, where no gentleman or principal farmer resides to set them the

spondence, ii. 142, 145.) I have already quoted the remarkable passage to the same effect, in Lord Clare's speech in the debate of Feb. 19, 1798.

[1] Camden to Portland, Jan. 3, 1797.

example. At Carlow a considerable subscription was made for the troops as they passed, and at Limerick and Cork every exertion was used to facilitate the carriage of artillery and baggage by premiums to the carmen ; and in the town of Galway, which for a short time was left with a very inadequate garrison, the zeal and ardour of the inhabitants and yeomanry was peculiarly manifested. . . . In short, the good disposition of the people through the South and West was so prevalent, that I have no doubt, had the enemy landed, their hopes of assistance from the inhabitants would have been totally disappointed. From the armed yeomanry, Government derived the most honourable assistance. Noblemen and gentlemen of the first property vied in exerting themselves at the head of their corps. Much of the express and escort duty was performed by them. In Cork, Limerick, and Galway, they took the duty of the garrisons. Lord Shannon informs me that men of 3,000*l.* to 4,000*l.* a year were employed in escorting baggage and carrying expresses. Mr. John La Touche, who was a private in his son's corps, rode twenty-five miles, in one of the severest nights, with an express. . . . The merchants of Dublin, many of them of the first eminence, marched sixteen miles with a convoy of arms to the North. . . . The appearance of this metropolis has been highly meritorious,' and it has been found possible 'greatly to reduce the garrison with perfect safety to the town. The number of yeomanry fully appointed and disciplined in Dublin exceeds 2,000, above 400 of whom are horse. The whole number of corps approved by Government amounts to 440, exclusive of the Dublin corps. The gross number is nearly 25,000. Of these, 8,359 cavalry have been armed, and 6,046 infantry. . . . In reply to a circular letter written to the commandants of the respective corps, their answer almost universally con-

tained a general offer of service in any part of the kingdom. . . . I am sorry in being obliged to say that in Belfast, and in some parts of the North, a different temper was manifested.'[1]

My task in the present chapter has been to a great extent that of an editor, selecting from the vast mass of Government correspondence such letters as most fully paint the condition of the country. This method of writing history is necessarily wanting in stirring and dramatic interest, but it has the advantage of enabling the reader to form an independent judgment of events, and it is, I think, peculiarly valuable where the chief facts to be recorded are changes in social conditions, new turns and modifications of popular sympathies and passions.

The main problem of Irish history is the fact that Ireland, after a connection with England of no less than 700 years, is as disaffected as a newly conquered province, and that, in spite of a long period of national education, of the labours of many able and upright statesmen, of a vast amount of remedial legislation, and of close contact with the free, healthy, and energetic civilisation of Great Britain, Irish popular sentiment on political subjects is at the present hour perhaps the most degraded and the most demoralised in Europe. The year 1796 contributed largely to this demoralisation. Anarchy and organised crime had greatly extended, and they were steadily taking a more political form, while Grattan and the other really able, honest, moderate, and constitutional reformers, had lost almost all their influence. The discredit which was thrown on the Constitution of 1782, and the utter failure of Grattan to procure either parliamentary reform or Catholic emancipation, had combined with the influences that sprang from the

[1] Camden to Portland, Jan. 10, 1797.

French Revolution to turn many into new and dangerous paths, and to give popularity and power to politicians of another and a baser type.

Still the mass of people seem as yet to have been but little touched, and the problem of making Ireland a loyal and constitutional country was certainly not an impossible one. But the men in whose hands the direction of affairs was placed, were determined to resist the most moderate and legitimate reforms, and they made the perpetual disqualification of the Catholics, and the unqualified maintenance of all the scandalous and enormous abuses of the representative system, the avowed and foremost objects of their policy. Their parliamentary majority was overwhelming, and with the existing constituencies there seemed no prospect of overthrowing it. Very naturally, then, the reforming energy of the country ebbed more and more away from the constitutional leaders, and began to look to rebellion and foreign assistance for the attainment of its objects. Arthur O'Leary, who was by far the ablest of the Catholic clergy and writers, in a letter to a supporter of the Government, expressed his opinion of the situation and prospects of the country in words which appear to me both weighty and unexaggerated. 'Ireland,' he said, 'owes its present security to the inconstant elements, and to the constant loyalty of the majority of the people, a loyalty which, I am sorry to find, a blind, blundering, and tyrannical policy is constantly endeavouring to shake, if not entirely to annihilate; as is manifestly evident from some late proceedings of the Irish House of Commons, declaring in the face of Europe, and within three days' sailing of a powerful and vigilant enemy, that the emancipation of the Catholics of Ireland is inconsistent with the security of the kingdom and its connection with England. This is

as much as to say to the French, "As their emancipation is inconsistent with the security of this kingdom, it is natural to expect that they will fly into your arms from ours, always uplifted to oppress them."'[1]

[1] Arthur O'Leary, Jan. 30, 1797. (I.S.P.O.)

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